



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 6, 2020

Day 18

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Hon. members, we will be led in the signing of our national anthem by the press secretary to the Minister of Transportation, Ms Brooklyn Elhard. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please remain standing.

Let us take a moment to pay tribute to three former members who passed away this year.

Mr. Raymond Reierson

October 7, 1919, to January 30, 2020

The Speaker: A veteran of the Second World War, Raymond Reierson served five terms as an Alberta Social Credit Member for St. Paul from 1952 to 1971. In 2014 Mr. Reierson was awarded France's highest honour for military and civilian merits, the Legion of Honour. He was recognized for his role on D-Day and during the Normandy campaign as part of the Royal Canadian Artillery. Upon receiving the award in this building, he remarked on what it meant to him as someone who'd fought for democracy and was elected through the process of democracy as well. Mr. Reierson passed away on January 30, 2020, at the age of 100.

Mr. Frederick Thomas Mandeville

May 3, 1922, to April 7, 2020

The Speaker: Frederick Thomas Mandeville served four terms as an Alberta MLA, as a Social Credit Member for Bow Valley-Empress from 1967 to 1971 and for Bow Valley from 1971 to 1982. Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Mandeville served as a councillor for the county of Newell for nine years from 1958 to 1967. Throughout his 25 years dedicated to public service this businessman, rancher, and self-described cowboy was a strong advocate for and supporter of the agricultural community. Mr. Mandeville passed away on April 7, 2020, at the age of 97.

Ms Erin Babcock

June 6, 1980, to April 25, 2020

The Speaker: Erin Babcock was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on May 5, 2015, as an Alberta New Democrat Party Member for Stony Plain. Working in health care and vulnerable populations in Alberta and Saskatchewan since 2006, she later trained to become a licensed practical nurse, specializing in care for acute stroke in geriatric patients. Ms Babcock drew parallels between nursing and serving as an elected representative, noting that both professions are about serving people and advocating for them. Many of us in this Chamber had the privilege

of working alongside her and witnessing her dedication, her courage in a courageous battle. Ms Babcock passed away on April 25, 2020, at the age of 39.

We will be paying tribute to these former members at a future time, when members of their families are able to join us. In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Reierson, Mr. Mandeville, and Ms Babcock as you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let the perpetual light shine upon them.

Statement by the Speaker

Canadian Forces Helicopter Crash Deaths

The Speaker: Hon. members, also taking place at this time in Trenton, Ontario, is a memorial service for the six Canadian soldiers who lost their lives giving the ultimate sacrifice in service of our country: Sub-Lieutenant Abigail Cowbrough, Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Master Corporal Matthew Cousins.

In a moment of quiet reflection I ask you to reflect upon the ultimate sacrifice that each of those young Canadians paid on our behalf. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let the perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.

You may be seated.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has the call.

Livingstone-Macleod Response to COVID-19

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last two months Albertans have faced a generational crisis. Throughout that time they've shown a strong commitment to their civic responsibilities. Albertans have followed the directives of our chief medical officer of health admirably, resulting in our province outperforming even our most optimistic projections about the COVID pandemic.

There's another way Albertans have truly stepped up, as they always do. Albertans have shown the world that caring for each other in trying times makes a huge difference. One can see this by looking up the hashtag #Albertacares, as it provides dozens of such examples, but today I want to focus on a couple of examples local to my riding of Livingstone-Macleod.

Harnessing the civic spirit so prevalent in Canada during the world wars, Heritage Acres Farm Museum in Pincher Creek has begun a Victory Garden. Originally grown during the world wars to support communities while vital supplies they could ship were sent overseas to support our troops, Victory Gardens were a vital source of food, vitamins, and morale for the community. Now, following that same civic spirit, Heritage Acres is growing a Victory Garden to support members of their community in need as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, they're also receiving thousands of dollars in donations for the purchase of beef animals for slaughter to be able to distribute ground beef in hampers to those in need.

Since the outbreak in High River both the local community and the Filipino community around the province have rallied around those diagnosed. The Filipino community in Edmonton raised over \$10,000 to deliver food to over 120 individuals in High River. These efforts have been supplemented by the Salvation Army, Food for Thought, Foothills Helping Hands, and many other local organizations.

Albertans have always stepped up to support each other through difficult times. This pandemic is no exception. I'm grateful and proud of Albertans who have volunteered their effort and their time, especially those in my riding.

Thank you.

1:40 Former MLA Erin Babcock

Ms Goehring: Erin Babcock was a fierce advocate for her community and her family, and that's one of the reasons that she was such an effective MLA. What has become abundantly clear over recent days was that her ability to connect with people, no matter who they are, has made her so very special. She and I connected not only through our work in the House but through our children, who are the same age and played hockey. As moms we cheered our children on together side by side.

Erin always found a way to connect with people. I would like to share with the Assembly just a few of the memories of current and former staff who have reached out to each other to remember Erin.

We had a connection that made us easy friends. When I was new in my job, she made it clear that she would always have my back, and she did.

She really did have a way of making complete strangers feel welcome . . . She was fun loving and had no interest in titles or barriers.

She cared for everyone around her: her family, her constituents, her colleagues, and the staff which inspired me to work hard to support her work as an MLA. It was an honour to be her friend and I consider my time with her as a blessing.

She was a vibrant, funny, warm soul.

Erin was truly an amazing fighter.

Erin loved reading – history, particularly ancient Greek and Roman. And loved to drive – she found it peaceful. But really, she always just wanted to serve people.

Erin was my person, that someone who always took the time to see me, to remind me to step away from the work for a few minutes so she could pull me aside and ask me how I was doing. I will miss my friend for always, and am so grateful I was lucky enough to call her that.

She handled every challenge with grace, a smile on her face, and appreciation for those around her.

Mr. Speaker, in two minutes there just isn't enough time to say what Erin meant to us all. She was truly one of a kind. We love her, and we miss her.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

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

Muslim Community and Ramadan

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour as a member of the House and an MLA of Islamic faith to rise today in recognition of the holy month of Ramadan, that started on April 24. During this month Muslims fast every day from dawn to sunset. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and teaches us patience, generosity, discipline, and a spirit of social belonging and unity, to name a few. It also helps to reflect on the hardship felt by others, ourselves, our actions, and our values.

This year Muslims across the world are remembering and praying for those impacted by COVID-19. I encourage all Albertans to join in marking Ramadan by remembering the less fortunate and celebrating acts of kindness and charity, which the world desperately needs at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the Muslim community has an important history in Alberta. The first mosque in Canada, the Al Rashid mosque, was built right here in Edmonton in 1938 with help from local religious

communities. Larry Shaben was the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake, and he became the first Muslim elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1975 and the first Muslim cabinet minister in Canada in 1979. Alberta is home to many milestones for our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this year Ramadan is different for many families. COVID-19 prevents large family and social gatherings, but it has put a greater emphasis on giving, sharing, praying during this month. Ramadan Mubarak to everyone in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. May this holy month bring each and every one peace and joy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 and Women

Member Irwin: There is much talk about reopening the economy, but the fact is that the economy was never closed for most. People have been working this whole time; it's just that so much of this labour isn't easily quantifiable. Quite simply, it's mostly women's unpaid labour, and it's women who are impacted most by this pandemic. "But what about the men?" you ask. What about the men? Well, I'm sorry to tell you that it's not just about men this time.

It's true that recessions historically have hit men the hardest. This time it's different. Women have been disproportionately impacted by COVID, and the job numbers prove this. I cannot tell you how many women have reached out to me to share how challenging things are right now, how difficult it is trying to balance working from home, supporting their kids' learning, and managing many household duties, how without child care they're struggling, and how they worry about the availability and affordability of child care in the future. They're telling me that they don't know how much longer they can do this. They're facing increased economic precarity, and many of them aren't sure how they'll pay their rent and their bills. A lot of women right now are serving us on the front lines in health care, in grocery stores, in shelters, and in many of the workplaces deemed essential.

But what does this all mean? This means that the old ways of looking at economic recovery simply will not work. This means that if access to child care is not a central pillar of economic recovery, many women will not re-enter the workforce. This means that as we talk about getting back to normal, we need to remember that normal was an economy that held many women back. This means that as we reopen the economy, we must also reopen a conversation on gender equality. This means that if this government fails to apply an intersectional, gender-based lens, mark my words: this economic recovery will leave a whole lot of folks behind. Other governments are doing it, so this one can, too.

It's about choices. Since being elected, this UCP government has chosen to attack and ignore women. Now is their chance to choose to do better for women and for all of us. What's the worst that can happen? We get a fairer, more equal economy, where people don't just survive; they thrive. And that sounds like a pretty good choice to me.

Thank you.

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

Fort McMurray Flooding

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray is no stranger to natural disasters. As someone who was born and raised there, I can assure the House that we have experienced more than our fair share. Sadly, it didn't take long for the Twitter environmentalists with an axe to grind to start saying that the flood

was a sign. These people should be ashamed of their lack of empathy and humanity. People who routinely condemn our world-class responsible energy development tried to tie this tragic event to the oil sands and said that we deserved it. They said that it was a sign that we should shut down our industry, that has fuelled not only our region but our country for decades. Let me be clear. There is no deeper meaning to this flood. Natural disasters are not a sign or a punishment or an opportunity to preach your ideology.

If you want to find the true meaning in this tragic event, you didn't have to wait until the water receded. People quickly opened their homes to take in friends, family, and even strangers. Almost as soon as the water levels went down and people were let back into their neighbourhoods, people mobilized to help: volunteers making food, delivering meals, water, and snacks to all those in need, setting up Facebook groups to help identify those with needs and match them with help; pumps being carried from basement to basement until everyone on the street was free of standing water; volunteers mobilizing to remove wet, soggy drywall and insulation from the basements; neighbours helping neighbours in the most selfless and profound way.

That neighbourly spirit didn't end at our city limits. Groups like the Samaritan's Purse have come up to help as we enter the recovery stage. Trucks and trailers loaded up with much-needed supplies have been pouring in from every corner of this province. Thank you. Even with so many feeling the squeeze of COVID and low oil prices, they stepped up to help. The real meaning doesn't come from the natural disaster but in how we rise up as a community. We will get through this together. We are Fort McMurray strong.

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

Ramadan

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to recognize the holy month of Ramadan and wish everyone observing it a peaceful and blessed Ramadan. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam. It is a blessed month for fasting, prayers, offerings, and reflection and ends with a three-day festival called Eid al-Fitr. While there is a huge diversity of thoughts and traditions within the Islamic faith spanning over 14 centuries, Ramadan is unique in how it brings families, communities, and Muslim umma together as one.

Ramadan looks different this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I'm heartened to see the community coming together in faith while observing physical distancing and other restrictions on gatherings. In keeping with the true spirit of Ramadan, everyone is finding new ways to reach out to their friends and neighbours, to the sick and the elderly, to those isolated and quarantined, and to those who are struggling to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, Ramadan is also an opportunity for all Albertans to learn more about the diversity of faith and tradition within our province and come together to create a society that understands, respects, and values its diversity. It's unfortunate that last week we saw a very disturbing video directing fear, Islamophobia, and hatred towards the Al Rashid mosque and the broader Muslim community.

1:50

Recently we have also seen reports of increased racism and prejudice against people of Chinese and Asian descent. That's unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, it's more important than ever that we stand together and emerge stronger in faith and character on the other side of this pandemic.

With that, on behalf of the Official Opposition Ramadan Mubarak to all celebrating and also Eid Mubarak in advance.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

COVID-19 Outbreaks at Meat-processing Facilities

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by expressing condolences to all of the families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 and in particular to the family of Hiep Bui, who was remembered this week for her kindness.

The outbreak at the Cargill plant is the biggest in Canada, the outbreak at JBS is the second biggest, and cases are now surging at Harmony Beef. Two people have died. Has the Premier reached out to offer his condolences to their families, and today will the Premier commit to an emergency debate to address these dangerous outbreaks?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join the hon. the Leader of the Opposition in once again offering our condolences to all of those loved ones of Albertans and visitors to this province who have lost their lives to the COVID-19 virus. We've offered those condolences at every announcement of a fatality.

I can inform the Leader of the Opposition that the Government House Leader will be bringing forward a motion to allow for an extended debate on Alberta's COVID-19 response, as we've done during some of our extraordinary sittings in recent weeks.

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But on this particular matter, the failures at Cargill are too many to count: workers who tested positive with COVID-19 ordered to come back to work; workers promised extra pay if they didn't call in sick or had their jobs threatened if they did; managers wearing face masks while staff were given nothing; the agriculture minister proudly claiming the work site was safe a day before hundreds of new infections were revealed and a worker died. It's outrageous. Will the Premier commit to a public inquiry?

Mr. Kenney: What is most outrageous, Mr. Speaker, is the NDP's predictable desire to politicize these deaths, these tragedies, and the broader crisis facing this province. This government has in all respects carefully followed the best expert advice that we have received in the pandemic control response, including with respect to meat-packing plants: the advice we received from Alberta Health, public health officers, including the chief medical officer of health; occupational health and safety; the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Alberta Agriculture; and all of our expert officials.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public officials give advice; cabinet makes decisions. These plants are too dangerous for OH and S inspectors, they are too dangerous for Canadian Food Inspection Agency inspectors, but the Premier appears to think it's okay for workers. His record of failure is this: Cargill, 949 workers infected; JBS, 487 workers; Harmony Beef, 36 workers; two

workers dead. This government continues to put the profits of some over the lives of others. Why won't you shut down these plants?

Mr. Kenney: To be clear, what the NDP leader is asking the government to do is to politically intervene, to override, ignore the advice of the chief medical officer of health, of the occupational health and safety branch of Labour and Immigration, of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, of Alberta Agriculture officials, all of whom have validated their belief that all necessary precautions have been taken. As the chief medical officer of health has said, Mr. Speaker, a team of hundreds of people was deployed from Alberta Health Services to deal specifically with the Cargill plant as soon as the first outbreak was confirmed. Extraordinary measures have been taken and will continue to be taken.

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

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, you know, the Premier can't continue to throw the chief officer of health under the bus to make up for decisions his cabinet has made, but let's move on.

Rural Physicians

Ms Notley: The government is also at war with Alberta doctors, and it's rural communities who are paying the price. Doctors are resigning from their local hospital, closing their practice, or leaving Alberta altogether. Families in Stettler, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Rimbey, Canmore, Three Hills, Bragg Creek, Drayton Valley, Cold Lake, Lacombe, and Pincher Creek have all seen reduced access to doctors. Why is the Premier doing nothing while the Member for Calgary-Acadia is creating a crisis in rural health care? Is he ignoring his rural members, or are they just not speaking up?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is continuing her perfect record of seeking to politicize the pandemic. The Minister of Health recently announced a package of measures, \$83 million in value, which means that rural physicians – there are about 800 rural physicians. That means about \$100,000 in additional compensation, on average. That means they will by and large be receiving more compensation than ever. We already have the best compensated physicians in Canada, 25 per cent better compensated than in other provinces.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing that it's about trust, not money, and here's why. The Member for Calgary-Acadia claimed that he was fixing the crisis he started, but he forgot to mention he was stripping 141 communities of their rural status. When he got caught, he blamed the public service, but when he put the doctors in those communities back on the list, he forgot to mention he was stripping them of part of their pay. How can the Premier believe a word this member says? No one in rural Alberta does anymore. That's clear.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we know what rural Albertans think of the NDP. That was evident in last year's election.

Everything else in the preamble to that question was false, categorically false. The truth is this. Under the NDP physician compensation increased by nearly 25 per cent in four years, when most Albertans were taking a 10 per cent pay cut. Now, Mr. Speaker, we want to compensate our physicians not only fairly but generously, but ultimately we must have the capacity to manage those costs in the long run.

Ms Notley: Well, it's working out really well for Albertans during this pandemic, particularly in rural Alberta.

Less than a week later 18 doctors in Westlock signed a letter blasting the Member for Calgary-Acadia. They wrote that all he did was "rebrand his previous cuts as gifts to pacify rural MLAs who were angry about the crisis he had caused in their communities." And, to be clear, I didn't write that; they did. Some of these Westlock doctors will be resigning from their hospital. They don't trust this government. They don't trust that member. How many towns have to lose their doctors before the Premier shows that member the door?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know what Albertans are looking for from this Legislature now? They're looking for a focus on the crisis that the province is facing, the greatest public health crisis in a century, the greatest economic crisis in decades, and instead what they're getting from the Official Opposition is a kind of business-as-usual, hyperpartisan, divisive, and dishonest politics. We're focused on getting the job done for Albertans while they're focused on dividing Albertans. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Notley: Well, certainly, if the Premier is concerned about name-calling, it's definitely true that that particular strategy maintains itself.

Economic Relaunch Strategy

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, on the crisis at hand, the Premier's plan to relaunch our economy has more blanks than a Mad Libs book. There are no sector-specific guidelines, no new support for small business, no benchmarks for containment. Thousands of small-business owners are anxious, frustrated, and speaking out. They feel like they're being asked to jump without a parachute. The chief medical officer is clear that we're not out of the woods yet. To the Premier: why didn't you consult with any of those industries in phase 1 before – before – launching this plan?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I, the ministers in this cabinet, officials in this government, and MLAs on the government side have been in constant consultation with job creators across the province, many of whom were pleading with us to move forward with reopening. Generally the message we received was this: to trust businesses to do the right thing, to apply with common sense the general guidelines that have been provided. Now, where there is need for greater specificity, there will be more industry-specific guidelines issued in the days to come. I know what the NDP's preference would be: to shut everything down for as long as they want. That's not what we're going to do.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's absolutely the opposite of everything that we've said. But fair enough. Carry on with your way.

It feels like the Premier didn't study for the exam, and he's trying to kind of cram at the last minute. Now, just yesterday I spoke with almost 300 business owners, and there are many, many unanswered questions. One of them is PPE. Many of these businesses are now scrambling to buy masks, sanitizer, and plastic barriers at their own expense. One business owner said that the cost of PPE and safety retrofits alone will not be offset by sales. So to the Premier: do you have any plan to support businesses in this province with PPE or just those in Ontario and Quebec?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to pick out the divisive cheap shot at the end of that comment. Alberta, because of the sagacity of our officials, stockpiled enormous stockpiles of medical grade personal protective equipment. We in Alberta, where 95 per cent of our COVID beds are empty, were seeing that other provinces were approaching 100 per cent capacity. So, yes, we decided as Canadians to share some of our medical grade equipment with other provinces that could be facing an Italian-style crisis, none of it to businesses, none of it below medical grade. The member should be ashamed of herself for politicizing that.

Ms Notley: Now businesses are looking for support right here in Alberta for a huge cost item. Restaurant owners, meanwhile, want to know if their menus have to be disposable. Do their servers need masks which they don't have? Does the 15-person limit still apply? Now, just three days ago the Premier told business owners that his government has no sector-specific guidelines while Ontario has already published more than 61 sets of sector-specific guidelines. Why is the Premier more focused on winning the early opening sweepstakes than he is on doing the homework necessary to help Alberta businesses open safely and, most importantly, stay open safely?

Mr. Kenney: You know, Mr. Speaker, as accustomed as I become to the endlessly divisive hyperpartisanship of the NDP leader, it never ceases to surprise me that at a moment like this she would engage in rhetoric of that nature. This government has already provided far more personal protective equipment to civil society than any government in Canada. Because of our readiness we provided 2.8 million procedural masks, 3.5 million gloves, and tens of thousands of N95 masks, gowns, goggles, and face shields, but we will not be able to provide, it's just simply impossible for us to be able to provide all of the equipment that every business would like. We will work with them to the greatest extent possible to provide equipment, but there are limits.

COVID-19 Outbreaks at Meat-processing Facilities

(continued)

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the management of the situation at Cargill, JBS, and now Harmony Beef has been an epic failure, and people have died. On March 6, the day after the first presumptive COVID case in Alberta, our caucus raised concerns to the minister of labour's office about work-site inspections and specifically asked about proactive inspections and hiring and training additional occupational health and safety investigators. To the Premier: why was nothing done to bolster safety in these work sites? We offered our assistance. Why did you ignore us and turn your back on so many Alberta workers?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes very seriously the health and safety of all Alberta workers. We have occupational health and safety officers out in the field doing proactive inspections, particularly in long-term care facilities. As well, issues were raised in the meat-packing industry. They were out there on numerous occasions. We are focused on ensuring that the health and safety of workers be protected and providing guidance to employers, and we urge employers and employees to work together to put measures in place to protect the safety of workers and all Albertans.

Ms Gray: Albertans were shocked to learn that when Cargill workers made a complaint to the labour minister, there was no in-person inspection at the time, only a virtual tour that apparently excluded the harvest floor. After this inadequate investigation the plant was deemed safe by your government, to then be shut down over safety concerns only five days later. Mr. Speaker, there are now over 900 cases at Cargill, representing nearly half of all employees there. Will the Premier commit right here and now that all inspections in the future will be done in-person? Will he acknowledge that his minister failed to do his job and that his failure put many Albertan lives at risk?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, it is truly unfortunate that the members opposite have chosen to categorize a virtual inspection as somehow subpar. This is simply not the case. We had inspectors at Cargill plant even prior to that inspection. The inspector who was doing the virtual tour went in there, guided the tour. There were both employer and employee representatives involved in that tour. They did a detailed inspection after the fact. Then they went back twice during the closure, and they are there this week to ensure that the measures that are in place are protecting the health and safety of workers. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: On April 18 this government cabinet, namely the minister of agriculture, assured workers on a telephone town hall that the Cargill workplace was safe. Then workers reported that they were called and asked to come in to work, even those that had asymptomatic versions of COVID-19. That's right; workers who tested positive for COVID-19 were told to come in to work. But two days later the plant was closed due to safety concerns. This entire province and all of Canada knows that this UCP government failed the workers at Cargill. Given this, will the premier support our call for a public inquiry once the state of emergency has lifted?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the opposition continues to politicize this. We are relying on and taking advice and guidance from expert health and safety officers, including the chief medical officer, Dr. Hinshaw, and occupational health and safety officers who are on the ground providing advice based on their assessment at that point in time and continued assessments as we go through these unprecedented circumstances. The measures put in place to protect the health and safety of workers are there, and we're continuing to monitor this. Based on the request for an overall review, we'll be doing that in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has a question.

Capital Projects and Economic Recovery

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our province recovers from COVID-19 and prepares to weather the economic storm of the coming recession, infrastructure will be an important part of our relaunch. There are many shovel-ready projects that can begin immediately. Our government must focus on job-creating projects and safety improvements as well as projects that support businesses and communities. To the Minister of Transportation: can you please inform this House how these timely projects will help with Alberta's economic recovery?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like the House to know that we have put in place an accelerated capital maintenance and renewal program, which includes \$350 million worth of new capital maintenance and renewal on Alberta roads and highways and \$60 million in operations, which includes pothole filling and other important maintenance. The objective is to provide short-term jobs while improving infrastructure so that when we get to the relaunch, the transportation system will be part of that and be able to handle the weight.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2020 our government made significant investments, including the accelerated capital maintenance and renewal spending, with over \$410 million in capital maintenance renewal and operations spending and with a quadruple budget for pothole repairs, from \$20 million to now \$80 million. To the same minister: why was this decision made to prioritize capital maintenance and renewal projects?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Even though we're spending a lot of money right now, we are aware that Albertans have to pay the bill. So when we do make investments, we want to both have a short-term benefit of providing good-paying jobs for Albertans and the benefits of that employment, but we also want to set Alberta up for success after the fact, that it's not a short-term gain. Since our grandchildren and children might be paying for this infrastructure, we want to make sure that infrastructure is there for them to support their jobs, their economic growth, and their future.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of my constituents have had lots to say about the deteriorating condition of our roads and given that our government has provided \$60 million for pothole repairs across the province and the budget for pothole repairs has quadrupled, to the Minister of Transportation: with the increased budget for pothole repairs, what is being done to fix the roads and repair the potholes in a timely manner?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Potholes are a moving target. They form every day and especially every spring. So while we can't guarantee we'll fill every single pothole in Alberta, I think we can guarantee that all Albertans will notice an improvement in the average condition of the roads based on the work we're doing this year. Again, I want to emphasize, this is all work that would have had to been done, if not this year, next year or the year back, so we don't believe that we're wasting a penny. We believe that the whole program is actually going to improve Alberta's chances coming out of relaunch to start the economy while providing much-needed jobs and employment right now.

Economic Relaunch Strategy and Hair Care Professionals

Member Irwin: Yesterday our caucus held a large online gathering of hairstylists and barbers about this government's reopening strategy. These workers are disproportionately women, and they're worried about their personal health and the health of their families and their clients. They're concerned that the government hasn't thought through their reopening plan for stage 1. They need

answers. Look, a lot of us could use haircuts, myself included, but it's not worth anyone's health and safety. One worker asked us a good question, so I'll ask it to the Minister of Labour. Why can't she hug her own mother due to physical distancing, but she's now expected to cut other people's hair?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the government was very happy to be able to communicate with Albertans about our relaunch strategy and the different-phased approach we're going to have, the different triggers and indicators that are going to have to be met for our province to be able to proceed at any of these three stages. We've met many times with businesses, and we're going to continue to meet and get their feedback to continue to be able to communicate with them on how they can best take care of themselves, their staff, and their patrons. I'm happy to continue to be able to get that feedback and answer their questions. Of course, no one is forced to open, but we're happy to be able to work with businesses so they have that option.

Member Irwin: Given that I didn't hear a word about hairstylists and barbers and given that we're about a week away from this government's start date for stage 1 opening and personal services workers are looking for clarity and advice from this government – Ontario has provided detailed guidelines for workers in 61 different industries, from folks cleaning linens in hotels to those operating forklifts – and given the lack of clarity from this government, can this minister, when it comes to worker safety, tell this House and all hairstylists and barbers out there whether they're allowed to cut bangs and get that close to a client's face?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, just recently – I think it was this week – we had a town hall with 2,000 businesses. Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the chief medical officer of health, joined our cabinet members on that phone call to be able to take those types of questions. Our government is of course going to take the medical advice that our public health officials are going to be providing us. We're looking forward to continuing to answer those questions for them and making sure that those businesses are getting the best advice that they can to take care of their staff and their patrons.

Member Irwin: Given that again I heard nothing about hairstylists and barbers and given that there are so many questions from them and the public when it comes to reopening and given that public health requires that workers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep society safe, yet the government hasn't provided that clarity, I'll try again: can the minister of labour please tell all hairstylists and barbers whether they must cycle through a full set of capes, gowns, and face masks after every client, who pays for their PPE, and will they have it before they're set to open in just a few days?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, many of the businesses throughout the province are all going to have different industry guidelines. Our office, our ministry, and the chief medical officer of health are going to do their best to be able to work with those different industries so that they can also help and be able to communicate what can and can't be done. Many different questions that hairstylists do have for Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the chief medical officer of health – for example, "From which direction may a patron have their hair blow-dried?" is one of the questions that she had –

the epidemiologists in the ministry and Dr. Hinshaw are working right now, studying the research so that those guidelines can be provided to that industry.

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

Specialized Primary Care Clinic Funding

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Acadia has utterly botched his file. We all know this. One of the consequences of the cuts that he imposed on Alberta's doctors is to tear down the innovative practice model of specialized primary care clinics like Garneau Pediatric Associates. These doctors care for some of Alberta's most medically fragile children, kids who've often endured dozens of serious procedures like brain surgery or organ transplant. Why is the Member for Calgary-Acadia limiting these children's access to their pediatricians?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer this particular question especially because there's been so much confusion and wrong information about it in particular from the members opposite. A clinic expressed concern about the cap of 50 patients per day per physician. These are office visits. They're concerned that this would force them to reduce their services. Naturally, I was concerned, so my staff asked the ministry to check if that was at all true. The department compared the recent billings to the cap and found that there should be no material reduction for that clinic.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that if there is a lack of clarity and misinformation, it is because of this minister's incompetence or failure to provide clear information and given that Dr. Rehana Chatur said, and I quote, "These cuts will impact the way we're able to provide care to our patients; we'll have to lay off staff, reduce the number of nurses working per day; that means physicians will have less time to spend with fewer patients that they'll be able to see" and she goes on to say that those patients will have to seek care at medicentres or emergency departments – that's the doctor herself. This member's staff have done nothing but, as he just did himself, smear Dr. Chatur for telling the truth. Why won't he stop smearing and, indeed, listen to Dr. Chatur and her colleagues?

The Speaker: I appreciate the member's right to ask a question; however, if you put a given and then provide only personal opinion, that still would constitute a preamble.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll reiterate that when we heard this concern from this physician and from this clinic, we took steps to validate and to make sure that if that was true, we could take steps. We have done that research and reached out to that clinic – I understand that the ministry has – so that we can be able to correct the misinformation in particular that is coming from the member opposite.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that if the minister knows that this works in a different way, please, by all means, enlighten us and put that information out in the public and given that Brian Noble, who's son Ryland has had 10 brain surgeries and a range of complex medical problems, said, and I quote, that limiting access to clinics that specialize in medically fragile children is terrifying, it puts the kids at risk, and visits to these facilities are often

extremely time sensitive and given that there has been an outpouring of support for doctors from parents like Brian using the hashtag #patients4abdocs, why isn't the member listening to Brian and other parents of Alberta's most medically fragile children?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we've taken steps to make sure that this misinformation is being corrected. A lot of the misinformation and fear and the smearing from the members opposite is antagonizing and creating anxiety among patients in this province. We're happy to continue being able to correct that misinformation so that patients are understanding the measures that we actually are taking and that none of this is going to be materially reducing the services that patients are receiving in their clinics.

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

Home Education and School Re-entry Plan

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 has brought with it a lot of uncertainty. Our students have had to adapt to online learning from their homes, while teachers have had to re-evaluate how they teach and learn and how best to convey the curriculum online. This morning the Minister of Education provided Albertans with an update on how student learning is progressing. I know that schools in Lethbridge have adapted quickly and have been working with parents to ensure that every student is able to continue learning amidst this pandemic. To the Minister of Education, could you please inform this House how schools and teachers are continuing to provide education across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Lethbridge-East is absolutely correct. Both schools and teachers in Lethbridge and across Alberta have quickly adapted. To be specific, 91 per cent of school authorities are offering online learning to their students, 53 per cent are e-mailing homework home, and 47 per cent are sending paper-based work to their students. Our system has adapted rapidly, and I want to thank all of our hard-working teachers across this province for stepping up to support our children.

Mr. Neudorf: Given that many families across our province are negatively impacted by COVID-19 with employment rates at an all-time low and given that many families were struggling financially day to day even before the pandemic, many students may not have access to the equipment they require to learn online and given that only 47 per cent of school authorities are sending paper-based homework to their students, to the same minister: can you explain how students are receiving the technology they require to do this online learning?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. I was pleased to share that school authorities and our government have provided roughly 60,000 devices to students as they learn from home. Additionally, the Métis Nation of Alberta in partnership with Rupertsland institute has purchased an additional 2,200 devices for Métis students. Online learning is just one aspect of an at-home learning program, but our system and communities have come together to ensure students have the supports that they need.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the uncertainty of how the COVID-19 pandemic will unfold over the summer and given that the government has tentatively listed school reopenings as part of the stage 2 relaunch strategy and given that it'll take time to help our students transition back to in-class learning, can the Minister of Education please explain the steps being taken to create a plan for when students hopefully return to school later this summer?

2:20

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are working with our education partners as we develop a detailed re-entry plan for this upcoming school year. While we do not know what health guidelines will be in place yet, we are considering three scenarios, which include a return to regular schooling, schooling with restrictions, and continuing at-home learning. I'm looking forward to sharing more details of this plan as it is finalized in the coming weeks and look forward to sharing it with everyone else as well.

Thank you.

COVID-19 and Care Facilities

Ms Sigurdson: For weeks we the NDP opposition have been calling on the UCP government to protect seniors in continuing care facilities. Thirty-six days ago Albertans were told the virus had been spreading through some seniors' facilities by workers who hold jobs at more than one seniors' site. The UCP said that it would limit staff to a single site but has gone dark on when this critical measure will be put into place. To the Minister of Health: why won't your government set clear guidelines for single-site staffing to limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep seniors and staff safe?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it unfortunate that the NDP would distort the issue and, quite honestly, accuse Dr. Deena Hinshaw, our chief medical officer of health, of taking the precautions that are required for these facilities anything but seriously. She has been providing the guidelines and the recommendations and the orders for these facilities. I'm told that 95 per cent of the workplaces have been able to implement the order for the one-site recommendation.

Thank you.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that last week we made several inquiries to the Minister of Health's office about progress with improving conditions inside continuing care facilities during the pandemic and given that the minister's office was asked whether all continuing care facilities were now supplied with proper personal protective equipment and given that we've received no response, to the Minister of Health, we are asking you once again: do all continuing care workers now have PPE? If not, when can they expect it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to remind the hon. member that in our continuing care facilities 20 per cent of the beds are going to be provided by AHS. So, of course, AHS would be the organization that would be overseeing the distribution of the personal protective equipment for the employees on those sites. They've also been working with the 30 providers throughout the province providing care in our continuing care facilities for the other 300 sites throughout the province, making sure that those

facilities have the personal protective equipment for them to be able to provide to their employees on those sites.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, given that this is still an outstanding issue and given that our front-line heroes are saying that without the guarantee of wages and full-time equivalent hours they will be put in situations where they will not be able to support their families or themselves and given that the minister was only willing to offer them an extra \$2 more per hour when other provinces are offering double or even triple that, will the minister tell us how many additional staff have been hired and will he commit to increase the amount and expand it to include all workers within continuing care facilities?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Both my office and the ministry as well as the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek have been meeting and speaking continuously with the providers that are in continuing care to be able to understand from them what's happening in their facilities and the needs that they have, the cost pressures that they have. We are going to continue to work with those providers throughout the province and hope to be able to understand from them what measures we can do to further support them and their staff and their patients.

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

School Re-entry Plan

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has shown a reckless disregard for the safety of Albertans with the reopening of the Cargill plant in High River and its failure to provide sector-specific guidance to personal service businesses, which are scheduled to reopen in just eight days. Students, parents, teachers, and staff are also incredibly worried that now the Minister of Education will send them back to classrooms without a plan to keep them safe. Will the minister commit that she won't reopen schools without a safety plan that is endorsed by the provincial school boards, all of them, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Councils' Association, and all staff groups?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As I indicated earlier in my press conferences, I am in consultation with all of the school boards in the province, the ATA, the Alberta School Councils' Association, the independent schools, the charter schools, the college of Alberta superintendents. We're doing an engagement to look at what re-entry looks like. I've put forward three scenarios that we're looking at, and we will be happy to give more details as they are available.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the question was whether you will wait to open them until you've got assurances that all partners are on board and that they all feel safe, Mr. Speaker, and given that on Monday the government was unable to answer even the most basic questions from hairdressers and barbers and given that schools will need specific guidelines on physical distancing in classrooms and lunchrooms, rules for playgrounds and hallways, and how to deal with a wide range of hygiene challenges, will the minister commit to developing a written plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19 well in advance of reopening any schools to students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The answer would be yes. We are in the process of developing a very detailed plan. We are in the initial stages of the consultation with all our education partners, and they have brought forward – we have put out a discussion guide, and they have given us feedback. We’re developing that plan as we speak right now, and we look forward to sharing it with everyone as soon as it’s fully developed.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister laid off more than 20,000 education workers only days after promising that she wouldn’t and given that this decision has left Alberta teachers and parents alike questioning whether they can trust what comes out of this minister’s mouth and given that maintaining physical separation means that we absolutely cannot be crowding classrooms with more students, will the minister commit to provide emergency funding to support the staffing levels that are necessary to keep Alberta students safe when they do return to school?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the health and safety of our students and our staff are paramount in our decision-making. The decision that was made a little while back was a very difficult decision to make. We value all of our employees, all of our staff. We know how important they are. As was indicated, full funding is restored as of July 1. I look forward to all of them coming back when we are able to safely do so. Again, I refer back to the three scenarios that we are putting forward. We’re developing strong plans so that parents can be confident that we will have a great plan in place when students come back.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has a question to ask.

Rural Roads

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ve been contacted by a great number of constituents in Lesser Slave Lake regarding poor road conditions, particularly on highway 2 around the Slave Lake area. These roads, the economic arteries of our north, are riddled with potholes, and residents are concerned about their safety and their families’ mounting costs for damages to their vehicles. Through you to the Minister of Transportation: what is the ministry doing to improve the road conditions in Lesser Slave Lake, particularly on highway 2?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the hon. member, who has been all over our office about this situation, I only have one thing to say about those complaints. Those people are right, which is why we are going to pave 25 kilometres of the highway, including through Slave Lake, starting as soon as we can. But we know that that’s not all there is to do. Across the province what’s really interesting is that the best way to get your road done this year is to have the worst roads in Alberta. The hon. member just pointed out one of the places where the roads need the most improvement. It is getting the most improvement. That’s what we’ll try to continue to do all across Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that a well-maintained road system is vital to the economic prosperity of the province and given that some residents in rural constituencies like mine have to drive for hours to

do simple tasks like taking their kids to school, picking up groceries, or filling up a tank of gas, does the ministry have plans that might assure my constituents that these roads will be safe and well maintained for years to come?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we’re going to do the best we can. Let me say to the hon. member that we try to keep the roads safe every single day and every single kilometre in Alberta, but the fact is that maintaining roads – though they seem to be still, they’re constantly moving. They particularly move in the spring when the frost comes out of the ground. So there’s always work to do. But with the help of the hon. member, with municipalities and citizens to let us know and sometimes even members of the opposition who phone and complain about conditions of roads, we send our people out. They evaluate them, and we try to keep every kilometre of road in Alberta safe, and that’s what we will continue to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our number one priority as MLAs and government is to protect Albertans and keep our constituents safe and given that 2016 statistics show that rural Albertans are nearly twice as likely to be involved in car accidents that result in fatalities, what further steps will the ministry take to ensure that Alberta’s roads and highways, particularly in rural areas, are the safest in the country?

2:30

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do our best to keep everybody safe, but I will remind the hon. member and, I hope, all Albertans that the best way to keep safe is to follow the rules of the road, keep your vehicle as well maintained as you can, and care not only for yourself but for other Albertans. Drive within the abilities of your vehicle and the weather at the time. All Albertans’ lives, including rural ones, are important. But it’s a partnership. No one has more control over that than those sitting behind the wheel, and we encourage them to remain safe and look after themselves and their families.

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

COVID-19 and Agricultural Workers

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta’s farmers are facing another difficult season. Many commodity prices are trending towards record lows or are highly uncertain. The Canadian government visa office in Mexico has been closed, and service from that office remains questionable. Farmers need a clear path forward now, and many are worried that there are just not enough workers supporting them this season. Minister, what are the additional steps you’ve taken to ensure that farmers have the labour supply they need and the means to keep them safe to get through the season, or are you just hoping for the best?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. On behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry we’re working with the federal government to ensure that we have temporary workers coming in this summer to be able to harvest the crops and get them planted. It’s critically important to maintain our food security and also our food supply chains, and we’re working with the federal government to ensure that as temporary foreign workers come in, they’re being

briefed on the realities we have with COVID-19. Programs have been announced by the federal government to support farmers and bear the extra costs associated with this.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that many of our producers are very concerned that they're not going to get the workers they need to get their crops planted and harvested this year. Given that those workers' safety should be an absolute priority and given that protective equipment is a crucial part of protecting the workers on the farm or in food-processing facilities, can the minister outline his plan to ensure that farms and food-processing facilities have sufficient PPE for their workers, or is he just going to sit back and wait for Justin Trudeau to do his job for him?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our focus is on the health and safety of workers in addition to assisting the farmers to get the work done, get the crops off. We continue to work with all businesses in terms of ensuring that if there is a need, they can make a request to see if there is potential for PPE. As indicated by the Premier earlier, it is up to the businesses to be able to procure that. To the extent that we can assist that, we will. It's very difficult to provide PPE to all workplaces, but we will provide guidance to employers to make sure that employees are safe.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this year's farmers and food processors are facing massive uncertainty and given that due to isolation requirements some work is already behind schedule and given that this comes after a number of difficult years for many farmers and also given that the unprecedented disruption caused by the pandemic on our agricultural sector will mean hardship for many farmers, will the minister let farmers just struggle by themselves, or can he promise that he will have an emergency preparedness fund for farmers dealing with the challenges resulting from COVID-19?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry continues to work with federal counterparts to provide support for the agricultural sector. This is a critical, important sector of our economy. In addition, I know that the minister also launched a new website to be able to try to match up Albertans with jobs in the ag sector so that we can continue to deal with potential labour shortages as there is higher absenteeism in this sector at this point in time given the pandemic.

Environmental Monitoring of the Oil Sands

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, last week the Alberta Energy Regulator announced that more than a dozen environmental rules to monitor air, water, and wildlife at 16 different projects in the Alberta oil sands were being lifted. Today we learned the tragic news that more than 50 birds died after landing on a tailings area belonging to one of the companies given relief from these rules. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: to prevent such tragedies like this from happening in the future, will the minister commit to restoring these monitoring requirements immediately?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, I see that the time in social isolation has not improved the member's mood or the member's coming in and presenting situations that are not factual. The Alberta Energy Regulator has not reduced requirements when it comes to tailings

ponds and birds. Unfortunately, it does appear that the non tailings ponds in the area were frozen because of a late winter up in that area of the province. What we do know from the AER, though, is that the companies took all mandated measures in regard to bird safety. The Alberta Energy Regulator is on the ground right now with federal biologists investigating, and they will have more to say in the coming days.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the changes were described by the AER as "unilateral" and given that these regulations being lifted included specifically regulations to overlook requirements to monitor wildlife, birds, and wetlands and given that this is the second time that this government has suspended environmental reporting requirements during this pandemic, will the minister share exactly who the AER consulted before unilaterally lifting these regulations? Was anyone consulted who cares about the environment and protecting wildlife?

Mr. Jason Nixon: As I said, it's sad to see that his mood still hasn't improved, though he seems to have found a secret place to get a haircut, or maybe he did it himself, Mr. Speaker.

To be clear, the AER has not stopped monitoring when it comes to wildlife or important issues like that. What they have said is that they've stopped certain reporting requirements, extended them, prolonged certain auditing requirements but have kept in the monitoring processes for immediate safety issues, for emergency response purposes. All that's happening here, Mr. Speaker, is some prolonging of data entry for long-term decisions not having to come in right away while companies deal with COVID-19.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister could improve my mood if he actually knew what he was talking about and given that the AER exempted requirements that included monitoring of animals through the use of cameras near oil sand sites and given that, again, the AER was unable to name if they had even consulted with communities who could be impacted by this unilateral decision, will the minister commit to at the very least reinstating these regulations until all impacted communities have been consulted, or has he exempted himself from accountability?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's shocking to see the NDP, on one hand, say that they want to make sure that workers are protected but then come into the House when it comes to an issue like this and say that they don't want workers to be protected. The Alberta Energy Regulator has put in place processes to help companies be able to protect their employees during COVID-19 on certain reporting requirements. Nothing has been changed as far as protecting or monitoring the environment or our preparedness for immediate environmental threats or threats to communities. Those processes all remain in place. This is simply the prolonging of data entry, auditing processes, to help companies keep their employees safe during COVID-19.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-Cross.

COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After two long months of heavy restrictions for Albertans our province is finally taking steps to safely reopen businesses and workplaces. As the Premier mentioned in his relaunch strategy announcement, we must take an approach that is guided by the expert advice of our public health officials. One critical part of managing the next phase of this pandemic will be contact tracing and continuing to build our testing capacity to increase our knowledge about the spread of COVID-19. My question is for the Minister of Health. What other steps are

being taken to monitor our province's relaunch strategy and ensure that our relaunch proceeds safely?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this House knows, a few weeks ago the entire government shifted gears to focus on how we would respond to COVID-19, both in terms of public health but also the massive economic impact it has had on our province. I'm proud to say that Alberta has led the country in per capita testing, which informs our contact tracing. Just last week we announced increased funding to further expand our equipment capacity and supply capacity for our testing. We've also presented a measured, comprehensive, and reasonable relaunch strategy.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that contact tracing is essential to safely reopening our province and given that international jurisdictions have used technology to enhance contact tracing and assist public health officials but given, Minister, that the privacy of Albertans must be respected as we continue to battle this pandemic, can the same minister please explain how the government is ensuring that our public health officials have the information they need while respecting the privacy of Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been tremendously impressed by the phenomenal work that's being done by our public health officials in the province throughout this crisis. The protection of personal privacy is crucial to Albertans and crucial to our government's approach to the relaunch strategy. The ABTraceTogether app, which was recently launched by AHS, is a great example of protecting privacy while providing another tool to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The app has been designed with privacy as a priority. It doesn't store any data past 21 days, the use of it is solely voluntary, and it does not use any GPS data.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans are eager to return to some degree of normalcy after these challenging months and given that the priority must remain the health and safety of all Albertans, especially during the public health crisis, and given that we are continuing to learn about best practices from other jurisdictions during the pandemic, can the Minister of Health please outline what other tools are being used to increase the capacity for contact tracing during this reopening phase?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently we announced – I think it was just yesterday – a \$4.5 million investment into new equipment and technology to be purchased by Alberta Precision Labs. This was made possible through a joint investment between AHS, the government, and an incredibly generous donation of \$1.7 million from the Calgary Health Trust. Thank you to them and their donors. This new equipment is one of many initiatives that we're constantly looking at to increase our testing and contact tracing capacity. Prior to this announcement our testing was at 7,000 per day. This is going to allow us to get to 16,000 tests per day. I'd like

to thank again our partners at the Calgary Health Trust for that donation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Small Business

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small business is the backbone of our province's economy. They provide countless jobs, pump billions of dollars into our economy, and foster innovation and growth in their local communities. These small businesses also improve many facets of our daily lives and play an essential role by employing people locally, expanding consumer choice, and keeping money circulating in our province rather than having it exported elsewhere. These businesses are owned by our friends, our families, and our neighbours, and they're doing the best they can to get by. That is why it is of utmost importance that we support them through this pandemic.

Many of these businesses, Mr. Speaker, were already struggling before COVID-19. These are not megacorporations with access to huge money reserves and global markets; most only have a few employees on payroll and tight profit margins. A survey of 10,000 small-business owners across Canada showed that a startling 1 in 3 feel that they will not be able to survive another month under these economic conditions. The federal wage subsidy was a good start to help these businesses so that they can keep paying their employees, but we need to do more. Payroll is not the only fixed cost that small businesses have. Rent, heat, electricity, and loans all need to be paid at the end of the month. Many of these small businesses have lost a majority if not all of their income entirely, and the wage subsidy only pays a fraction of their costs.

Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of small businesses in my constituency who are suffering right now, and we must continue to support them through this pandemic in every way possible. I call on all government members and their federal counterparts to look for additional ways to alleviate this crisis on business owners.

Economic Relaunch Strategy

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, reopening the economy is top of mind for most Albertans. We're all hoping to get our province moving and to return to normal life, but the threat of COVID-19 remains in Alberta, and this government is telling businesses to reopen without giving them clear guidance or appropriate supports. While some businesses are excited about the opportunity to reopen, many are scrambling to get answers on how to keep their staff and customers safe.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that there was little or no consultation with businesses or even with other levels of government. We heard from Mayor Nenshi and many others who are asking why they didn't have a seat at the table. Unlike the UCP government, our caucus is listening to Albertans. We want to see a smart relaunch that makes the safety of Albertans a priority, and we released a plan for a robust evidence-based relaunch strategy. But the UCP government has created confusion and uncertainty by rushing the relaunch without consulting the relevant stakeholders and without providing clear guidance to businesses.

The NDP caucus is urging this government to create a small-business task force to help businesses open safely by releasing a consistent set of rules before phase 1. Small businesses should also have access to provincial grants that will assist them with procuring appropriate PPE. For those workers and business owners worried about returning, they need to be assured that they're still able to access financial supports.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot risk an outbreak because a business tried to operate safely but was let down by this government's lack of guidance and support. It's time the government listened to Albertans instead of only listening to themselves.

OPEC and the Canadian Energy Industry

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, we are in a world health crisis that has resulted in significantly reduced energy demand. To complicate matters, Saudi Arabia began predatory dumping with the intent of collapsing world oil markets. OPEC nations used this pandemic as an opportunity, an opportunity to decimate North American energy. OPEC felt the pinch from increases in western free-market production and decided to abuse a world health emergency to crush North American industries in a vulnerable time. OPEC began an economic and political game of chicken, a game that we as a country had better wake up to.

The actions from Saudi Arabia should be a rally point for all Canadians. There is no better time than now to unify our country against oppressive regimes and make a move to self-sufficiency. These dictatorial theocracies have little concern for the environment, little concern about ethics, and little concern for human rights. This global decline in demand will have effects lasting for a year or more as inventories climb, but make no mistake; global demand will recover and is estimated to rise until at least 2050. Canada must be central to global recovery because in what universe can anyone justify importing OPEC oil when Canada has the most ethically produced supply of energy in the world? It is time to set ideology aside and unify this country. We should not give one dime to support dictators and tyrants who work against Canadian interests. Mr. Speaker, this crisis has demonstrated the need for self-sufficiency and a focus on national unity. Let's answer the bell.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 19, to be put on the Order Paper in my name, as follows:

Be it resolved that, despite any Standing Order and immediately on the passage of this motion, the Assembly is to debate the urgent public matter of the COVID 19 pandemic, for the purposes of receiving and considering further developments since the Assembly's April 1, 2020, debate relating to the pandemic, in the following manner:

- (a) the Premier may make the first statement not exceeding 30 minutes;
- (b) immediately following the Premier's statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition may make a statement not exceeding 15 minutes;
- (c) immediately following the Leader of the Official Opposition's statement and for a period not exceeding 30 minutes
 - (i) the Leader of the Official Opposition may ask questions on matters relevant to the Premier's statement, and

- (ii) the Premier may respond to those questions;
- (d) any other member of the Executive Council may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
- (e) immediately following each statement made by a member of the Executive Council and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes
 - (i) Members who are not a member of the Executive Council may ask questions on matters relevant to the statement, and
 - (ii) the member of the Executive Council who made the statement may respond to those questions;
- (f) a Member who asks a question or a member of the Executive Council who responds in accordance with clause (c) or (e) is limited to a period of 2 minutes at one time to ask that question or make a response;
- (g) immediately after all statements and related periods for questions and responses have concluded, the debate is considered to have been concluded by the Assembly without decision.

2:50

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time I will move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 42. Would you like me to read it out now? It's long.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) acknowledge that the principle that workers' health and safety in the meat-processing industry in Alberta is a critical priority and any risk to these workers' health and safety arising from the unmitigated spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at their work site is unacceptable;
- (b) urge the government to immediately implement the following measures in the case of a meat-processing facility where a worker at that facility tests positive for COVID-19:
 - (i) require the operator of the facility to immediately and temporarily suspend its operations;
 - (ii) prohibit the operation of the facility from restarting operations until
 - (A) the operator engages an independent workplace health and safety expert chosen by agreement between the operator and the workers or their representatives to conduct a thorough investigation into the facility;
 - (B) the independent expert provides to the employer and workers an investigation report that includes the independent expert's recommendations on how to mitigate the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at the facility;
 - (C) the operator implements all recommendations set out in the investigation report;
 - (D) the operator engages the independent expert to conduct an in-person inspection of the facility with the participation of workers or their representatives to confirm that the recommendations have been implemented;
 - (E) the independent expert confirms that the operator has taken all reasonable measures to ensure that the facility is a healthy and safe workplace to which the workers may return to work; and
 - (F) as an ongoing condition of the restarting operations the operator agrees to engage independent officers recommended by the independent expert for the purpose of implementing ongoing monitoring of the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at the facility;
- (c) urge the government to, during the period that operations are suspended at a meat-processing facility in accordance with these measures, provide the appropriate supports to

those members of the Alberta Beef Producers organization who suffer economic losses due to the resulting processing delays; and

- (d) urge the government to immediately, on the repeal or expiry of the declaration of the public health emergency related to COVID-19, establish a public inquiry into
 - (i) the death of the workers at Cargill and JBS meat-processing facilities in southern Alberta and
 - (ii) the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 to over 1,500 workers at Cargill, JBS, Harmony, and any other meat-processing facility that experiences a similar crisis.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Bill 14

Utility Payment Deferral Program Act

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 14, the Utility Payment Deferral Program Act.

This is one of a number of initiatives, Mr. Speaker, that our government is doing to support Albertans during this global pandemic. The purpose of this bill is to defer utility payments for Albertans that are suffering financially as a result of COVID-19. Now, while this is an important initiative, we have to recognize that the utility providers require cash flow that is generated from these payments in order to underscore their operations. The Utility Payment Deferral Program Act will allow utilities to continue to service Albertans while these payments are being deferred.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important act that will support vulnerable Albertans that are struggling financially from COVID-19. I humbly request that every member in this Chamber approve this legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings today?

Seeing none, I do have a number of tablings myself. I have the requisite six copies of the following memos: from the Government House Leader a memo dated May 4 regarding reconvening the Assembly, received in my office at 2:16 p.m.; a memo from my office, also dated May 4, to all members regarding the resumption of the sitting, with an abbreviated revised projected sitting date calendar for May 6 and 7, 2020; a memo from the Government House Leader dated today, May 6, regarding extended sitting times, received in my office at 10:40 a.m., which states:

Please accept this memo as notice required pursuant to Government Motion 10, agreed to . . . on March 17, 2020, that the public interest requires the Assembly to sit beyond the normal adjournment . . . on Thursday, May 7, 2020, and to sit Friday, May 8, 2020.

Lastly, a memo from my office, also dated May 6, to all members of the Assembly regarding the extended sitting times.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Podiatric Physicians of Alberta 2018 annual report, College of Midwives of Alberta 2018 annual report, Alberta College of Social Workers annual report 2019.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Hon. members, we received notice of motion at the appropriate time that the Official Opposition House Leader would like to request a Standing Order 42, so I will provide her a brief moment to speak to the purpose of granting unanimous consent, not the subject of the matter which she would like to debate.

COVID-19 and Meat-processing Facility Worker Safety

Ms Sweet:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) acknowledge that the principle that workers' health and safety in the meat-processing industry in Alberta is a critical priority and any risk to these workers' health and safety arising from the unmitigated spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at their work site is unacceptable;
- (b) urge the government to immediately implement the following measures in the case of a meat-processing facility where a worker at that facility tests positive for COVID-19:
 - (i) require the operator of the facility to immediately and temporarily suspend its operations;
 - (ii) prohibit the operation of the facility from restarting operations until
 - (A) the operator engages an independent workplace health and safety expert chosen by agreement between the operator and the workers or their representatives to conduct a thorough investigation into the facility;
 - (B) the independent expert provides to the employer and workers an investigation report that includes the independent expert's recommendations on how to mitigate the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at the facility;
 - (C) the operator implements all recommendations set out in the investigation report;
 - (D) the operator engages the independent expert to conduct an in-person inspection of the facility with the participation of workers or their representatives to confirm that the recommendations have been implemented;
 - (E) the independent expert confirms that the operator has taken all reasonable measures to ensure that the facility is a healthy and safe workplace to which the workers may return to work; and
 - (F) as an ongoing condition of the restarting operations the operator agrees to engage independent officers recommended by the independent expert for the purpose of implementing ongoing monitoring of the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 at the facility;
- (c) urge the government to, during the period that operations are suspended at a meat-processing facility in accordance with these measures, provide the appropriate supports to those members of the Alberta Beef Producers organization who suffer economic losses due to the resulting processing delays; and
- (d) urge the government to immediately, on the repeal or expiry of the declaration of the public health emergency related to COVID-19, establish a public inquiry into
 - (i) the death of the workers at Cargill and JBS meat-processing facilities in southern Alberta and
 - (ii) the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 to over 1,500 workers at Cargill, JBS, Harmony, and any other meat-processing facility that experiences a similar crisis.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you. Thank you for letting me rise on Standing Order 42 to speak to the urgency of the motion. I will be

requesting unanimous consent from all members of the House. As you're aware, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 42 is requesting that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion in regard to a matter that is urgent and pressing, specifically the motion that I bring forward today.

Now, we haven't had an opportunity to spend much time debating this topic and this issue, when it comes to the meat-packing plant, since we last sat. When last the House had met, on April 9, just days after the first confirmed case at the Cargill meat-packing plant – we have now seen, two weeks later, that there are almost 900 cases in that plant alone. We've also seen one death at Cargill and one death at JBS, and we believe that one death is one too many. What we would like to do is have unanimous consent to deal with this urgent matter, to talk about how we are now keeping these workers safe since they have been ordered back to work.

I find it interesting, actually, Mr. Speaker, just to highlight a couple things in regard to the urgency of this matter. In fact, during question period today the Premier actually said that he believed that it was important that we be addressing issues in this House that focus on this crisis and not to be divisive in politics, but Albertans actually expect us to be in this House discussing COVID. We also noticed, just as you have mentioned in your tablings today, that we have the motion, that was represented by the Government House Leader, for us to actually extend past Thursday into Friday of this week due to the urgent matter of COVID-19 and how it is impacting the everyday work of Albertans and their abilities to go on their day-to-day lives. We also heard from the Premier today that he believed that the government, which we just heard from the official Government House Leader – this matter is so urgent to discuss and COVID is so important to Albertans to discuss that the government has now decided to put a motion on the floor to debate COVID-19 in the coming future, to allow the Premier and the Official Opposition House Leader to discuss COVID. Again, when I talk about the urgency, very clearly we have heard from both the Premier today and the Government House Leader that they recognize the urgency of the matter of COVID-19.

What they have not addressed and what they have not specifically spoken to is the importance of worker safety and how COVID-19 is impacting those workers, so we are asking today that we get unanimous consent from all members of this House, again following your Premier's lead where he says that Albertans expect us to stand and discuss COVID and the importance of this, to talk about what happened in these meat-packing plants, to talk about how we're going to protect these workers and the workers that are going to be going back to work in the future as we open up the economy and to make sure that Albertans feel safe when they go back to work, because what we know today is that many of the workers at these beef plants do not feel safe.

3:00

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. Opposition House Leader.

Hon. members, as you know, Standing Order 42 requires unanimous consent of the Assembly.

[Unanimous consent denied]

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

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

The Chair: We are on amendment A2.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just on the amendment that has been brought forward almost a month ago now, April 8, 2020, the amendment before us would be to amend this act by striking out section 8, which is on page 3 of the act. The necessity of doing that is something that I'll explain during my brief remarks.

The Emergency Management Act, as you also said, is before us. The first amendment that was brought forward, not before us anymore, would have changed the time period from 90 days to 30 days, something that was identified by members of the local government elected community, that felt it was enough time to go from seven days to 30 days. That was, unfortunately, struck down or not accepted, but this amendment, Madam Chair, is something that we hope members of the government can appreciate and support.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, of course, has indicated to the Chamber that the government amendments to the Emergency Management Act were brought forward at the request of various cities, notably Edmonton and Calgary. He was relatively clear, and if you've had an opportunity to look at *Hansard*, he was relatively clear in there, saying that he consulted with cities and that the bill reflects their asks. But the Official Opposition has also consulted with people across the province, including representatives of the cities, and we heard different stories. It's been made clear to us that this bill does some things that they asked for, of course – thus the reason it was brought forward in the first place in the beginning part of April – but it does some things that very much are opposed by those same representatives of cities that the Minister of Municipal Affairs said he consulted with and got their agreement on.

To be crystal clear, the amendment before us, brought forward by the Official Opposition, will return the EMA to its original language in that portion. The amendment will, therefore, not allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify local orders at his or their sole discretion. It may be a different person in the future; it may not be a him. The amendment that we're putting forward will not allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify local orders at their discretion. The city of Calgary has been crystal clear as well that they believe this to be a dramatic increase in powers for the minister over their city, and they do not welcome them. It is not needed. In their view, it is not needed, and it is an expansion of powers over the city's local authority that is not welcome.

In our view and in consultation with experts, we believe the government is going too far with regard to emergency power legislation, just like they did, and we all have found out, with regard to Bill 10, and it will be the subject of amendments in the future. The amendment that we believe needs to be supported is ultimately reasonable, and we're asking government to also be reasonable in that regard and support it.

Passing this amendment that the city of Calgary, this caucus, legal experts believe – and, hopefully, members of the backbench of the government also will support it and know that it is reasonable. It's in the best interests of our democratic traditions not to overreach with regard to emergency situations. As we saw and as legal scholars and others have identified, Bill 10 was an overreach and needs to be reined in. We'll see that in the future. We on this side

were vocal about Bill 10. We are similarly concerned about the overreach identified on page 3 with regard to section 8, that amends section 24. As I say, it is not in the interests of the stakeholders at the local authorities, as we were led to believe.

Madam Chair, with that short explanation I will take my seat, recognizing that this amendment was, as I say, put back April 8, last month, and here we are about a month later debating it to conclude it. Hopefully, the conclusion will be a positive outcome for this amendment as we've seen from this government before that they need to change how their bills work as a result of, unfortunately, rushing to get them passed and having people look at them later and say: you know, that's probably not in the interests of democratic traditions in this province. I'd submit that, similarly, section 8 on page 3, which amends section 24 of the EMA, is not in the interests of local authorities, democratic traditions, or the interests of Albertans generally.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 13? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. Nellie would appreciate that. It did take a moment, but I knew it would come to you. Nellie McClung, after whom my riding was named, would be glad that you needed no assistance in finally coming up with the name of my glorious riding that I represent in the west end of Edmonton.

I must say that it was officials from the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and other municipalities who raised their concerns about the amendments to Bill 13 and the bill itself, and notwithstanding the claims of the government that they listened to and found no objections from municipalities about this piece of legislation, we beg to differ. I'm not sure what voices they were hearing or maybe not listening to, but certainly the objections were pretty clear from municipal officials that we spoke with that this amendment that we bring forward was a necessary amendment that would place limitations on the power of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify orders issued under a local state of emergency at his or her discretion.

3:10

Once again, like has been mentioned before by my hon. colleague, as in Bill 10, which was an overreach, in our view, of the provincial government into the municipal affairs of the municipalities in the legislation, we believe this also is an overreach, an unnecessary overreach and one that is objected to by the municipalities in this province.

This amendment returns to the old language in the act, and the municipalities we've talked to said that they explicitly did not ask for this change and they don't like it. They have no interest in this overreach, which would allow the Municipal Affairs minister to stick his hands in the middle of an emergency order and make amendments to it at his discretion. This amendment was brought forward as a result of discussions we've had with those municipalities who had concerns.

It's a little bit quizzical that the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated to the Chamber that they were brought forward at the request of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. He was relatively clear in that statement that he did so after consultations with them and was reflecting what he heard. But we've also consulted and very clearly heard another story, and it differs from that of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The cities are not totally opposed to everything in the bill – it does many of the things that they had

asked for – but this section that we wish to have retracted is not one of them. Some of the things are opposite to what they had desired.

So to be clear, the amendment that we have before us will return the EMA to its original language. It won't allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify local orders at his own discretion. As I mentioned before, it's a pattern that the government seems to be following that they wish to give to themselves rights to modify municipal legislation, municipal ordinances, at their own discretion. It concerns me that, as I've said before in this House regarding Bill 10, this type of meddling in municipal ordinance and bylaws, rules and regulations, and procedures and declarations is something that we are seeing as a pattern that this government is delving into, and it's a pattern that runs the risk of leaking over into times when the emergency measures act isn't in force any longer.

Those types of things have happened in the past where citizens have rightfully been very wary of government declarations that were emergency measures and wanting to ensure that they had a proper sunset clause on them, that they were grandfathered, and that they weren't giving excessive powers or extraordinary powers that the government of the day could use to change the role between the two levels of government by nature of the ability to delve into legislation during a time of an emergency measure that would extend beyond that emergency measure once it had actually expired. That's an argument that I've made before, and I think it's something that deserves full consideration because you want to look not only at what the government is proposing to do but also delve into the motivation behind what the proposed legislation actually accomplishes.

In our view, on the Official Opposition side, this is yet another overreach by the government which potentially could end up leaking over into a time frame where the emergency measure has expired. We want to make sure that this amendment places the limitations upon the minister so that he's not able to, at his own discretion, amend municipal legislation and local orders that they have in place. This certainly is something that was brought forward to us by the municipalities, and it wasn't an oversight, I don't think, by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'm not exactly certain why it didn't hit his radar and that it was left as part of Bill 13, but we seek to rectify it, and hopefully in his communications perhaps he can backcheck a little bit and determine exactly what the will of the municipalities was. He may actually say, "Yeah; we misinterpreted, and we indeed, I think, should accept this amendment to the bill," because, of course, in all clarity, the city of Calgary has been clear that they feel this is a dramatic increase in powers for the minister, and it's very unwelcome and totally unnecessary. So they share my concern that it's representative of a pattern of behaviour of taking greater measures of provincial control over municipal governance, and that's a bit concerning because the municipal governments in this country – not only in the province but in the country – are given an increasingly larger, larger load of the responsibilities without the accompanying powers to actually govern.

If we expect our municipalities – we're going to offload such a large degree of responsibility onto those municipalities. They will need to be able to have absolute confidence in the legislation and the ordinances and the declarations and the measures that they pass in their own legislative bodies, in their city councils and counties and reeves, village councils, and so forth, that they're not going to see the province reach in and make a discretionary change that otherwise you wouldn't expect should happen. It's going to cause, as I mentioned before in debate over Bill 10, a Big Brother mentality, where the municipalities will in their deliberations on any particular legislation think twice about moving forward on X, Y, or Z measure and wonder if indeed it'll pass the pleasure of the

current minister, who may decide at his discretion or her discretion to dig into the legislation and change it at will.

This amendment retracts that authority on the part of the minister to do so and gives the municipalities a level of confidence that they should have in exercising their own authority to legislate in the service of the constituents they represent. I think the pall that this casts over the civic legislators, the municipal legislators, in this province is one that may not yet be felt clearly by the general public. If indeed we don't listen to these municipal legislators who are saying, "Wait, wait, wait, wait; we need to be left to govern in our own sphere of responsibility, knowing that our contract with our voters is one that is going to be allowed to play out and we're not going to have the province sort of delve into our territory if they see something that doesn't suit their fancy on a particular issue; we don't want to be in a situation where we are hesitant to make a legislative decision, fearing that the province will actually overturn it or amend it or overrule it some time down the road or perhaps even immediately," it's almost like a kindergarten set-up that we're creating here, where the levels of government are not on an equal footing.

The partnership that has to exist in this country and in this province between the different orders of government has to be based on respect, and it has to be based on clarity and a certain amount of rigidity in terms of the jurisdictional powers that each level of government has.

3:20

Now, it goes without saying that, of course, the province has total power over the municipalities in reality because municipalities are creations of the province. They are born. They are legislative bodies. They're not constituted bodies, the municipalities I'm speaking about now. These municipalities recognize that, but the custom, the tradition, the legal framework has evolved over the decades that we've been in existence in this country. We're a fairly young country and things are still evolving, but I think that common knowledge is that the evolution has led us to a point where there's a respect between the different levels of government, that the jurisdictions should be maintained and recognized and that one shouldn't be granted the ability to influence the other on any automatic basis such as Bill 13, if not amended, would allow.

That's why I think we should be listening to the advice of municipal leaders in this province and making clear the jurisdictional boundaries and solidifying them and being firm and saying: yes, indeed we do respect them. Just as this provincial government stands fast and proudly maintains jurisdictional borders and parameters between the province and the federal government, the same thing should be ringing true in our relationship with our municipal levels of government. You know, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I think that if the Premier and the government demand that type of respect in terms of jurisdiction from the federal government, the provincial government should be practising what they preach and instilling in its legislation and embedding in its philosophy the concept that the municipality's jurisdiction is square and true, that it's bordered by rules and regulations, and it doesn't have a back door in it which the province could walk in and out of at will if something doesn't particularly suit them.

Now, of course, as I mentioned, the municipalities, if they run into financial difficulty, may ultimately get dissolved and taken over by the province and run by the province. That difference exists in the relationship between the province and the municipalities versus the relationship that is a constitutional one between the federal government and the provincial government. Notwithstanding that, that one is a constitutional relationship and one

is a legislated relationship, the conventions over time have developed to be known as jurisdictional sovereignty, and that's been respected. It's not the constitutional sovereignty that the federal and provincial governments maintain or have maintained by the courts, but it is a sovereignty that the society we live in has increasingly recognized, especially in a world where so much authority, so much responsibility has been devolving to the municipal levels of government in terms of providing social services, housing, health care, roadways, mental health services, security, you name it.

The cities are the closest level of government to all of our citizens, and they are becoming increasingly burdened with so many of the responsibilities that used to be actually in the provincial sphere. The province can't really have it both ways. They should be talking in the same language to the municipalities that they preach to the federal government when it comes to respecting jurisdictions. More than that, with respect to the relationship between the province and municipalities and also incorporating the larger role of the federal government, I think it's appropriate at this point in this debate to recognize that there's a need not only for the recognition that that responsibility has been devolved to the municipal governments but, beyond the sovereignty to regulate and legislate in their sphere of jurisdiction, they need the funding to do so.

I think that's been made clear by municipal leaders across this country, including Mayor Don Iveson of Edmonton, who has been charged with being or, I would say, honoured with being the leader of the municipal government association. I don't have the right name on the tip of my tongue right now, but he heads the municipalities association in Canada right now, and he is leading the call for municipal governments to be properly funded and to have – it's called the FCM, I think.

Member Ceci: Federation.

Mr. Dach: Yeah.

My argument in debate on amendment A2 to Bill 13, that we're talking about right now, stems in large measure from wanting to make sure that we are uniformly addressing the relationship that we have as a province with the municipalities and making sure it aligns with the realities of the responsibilities that we are burdening municipalities with in this day and age. Those responsibilities are heightened now in this time of pandemic, where we see the city itself, for example, creating spaces for those who are homeless and perhaps suffering from COVID-19, making sure there's a big shelter space provided. When that wasn't working well, they were arranging for hotel space for homeless people to be sheltered so that we didn't have the homeless population suffer a huge pandemic outbreak that would be vectored into the rest of our population.

Even at times of emergency we see that the city has taken those responsibilities seriously, yet to have, for example, in this situation an oversight of a provincial government come in and tell the city, "Well, we don't think you're approaching it correctly; you go ahead and close this shelter and open up something else because this is the way we think you should operate" is not something that you want to have happening in an emergency situation. An emergency measures act shouldn't put that type of second-guessing into the decision-making process that municipalities go through. It's tough enough as it is coming down on the right decision, but if you have to add into the mix the wonder as to whether or not it's going to pass the muster of the provincial government or trying to get a handle on exactly what they might be thinking before you actually come down with a decision on something that is as important as, for example, sheltering the homeless people during a pandemic, that's

something that can delay decision-making and potentially cost lives.

What we're debating here may seem like a small matter, but indeed small matters have very, very large consequences, and the consequences can be life and death. You know, if we had packing plants in this municipality of any size like we used to have a few years back – I worked at one of them in the '70s, and there were regulations both federal and provincial, but, I mean, if you have municipal business licences and so forth . . .

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 13? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to this amendment on Bill 13. It's always a pleasure to have the opportunity to return to the Legislature and to see colleagues and have the opportunity to do our work on behalf of Albertans. Now, of course, this is a bill that's been brought forward as part of the government's work to address the current situation in which we find ourselves, the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, that's why we find ourselves here as part of that urgent debate that's required. I'm happy to have the chance to speak to this amendment to this particular bill, that being Bill 13, amendments to the emergency amendment act, 2020, which is proposing to make some changes, I guess, to how the Minister of Municipal Affairs will interact with municipalities and indeed the powers that he has the opportunity to exercise in regard to municipalities and their introductions of a state of emergency.

I appreciate what my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung was sharing earlier when he was talking about the question of governmental jurisdiction, and I thought that he made a very apt observation in noting that indeed this is a government that has had a lot to say about the jurisdiction of the federal government over the provincial government of Alberta. Indeed, since before this Premier was elected, there have certainly been some sharp words as to his opinion of the Prime Minister, his opinion of many decisions of the federal government and their behaviour towards and support of the province of Alberta.

3:30

Now, indeed during our time in government we certainly had our own differences of opinion with the federal government on a number of issues, and we had the opportunity to work through and try to realize those. Certainly, there were some discussions that were had. But it's been a particular point for this government. So it is interesting, as my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung observed, that in so many areas this provincial government under this particular Premier, the UCP, seems very intent on cultivating a rather condescending and paternalistic attitude towards many of our municipal governments here in the province of Alberta and indeed has its fingers in so many aspects of how they operate and how they choose to approach affairs within their own jurisdiction.

I reflect back to one of the campaign promises that was made by this government, indeed that it would respect the city charters that had been negotiated, that there had been quite a bit of time put into those discussions between the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary and the mayors at the time, who remain mayors now. They spent extensive time negotiating, a couple of years to my recollection, those city charters. Indeed, it was in the election campaign platform of this government that they would respect and keep those city charters. They ran on that promise.

This government is very fond of talking about how many promises it has kept from that platform. It doesn't like to talk about

the ones it broke. Indeed, what we saw with the introduction of their budget last October was that they chose to entirely break that promise, a significant promise to the people of Edmonton and Calgary, and tear that agreement up utterly. Of course, we've seen that they like to do that with other things. They also tore up their agreement with physicians in the province of Alberta. So it seems that perhaps agreements with this particular government often aren't worth the paper they're printed on.

That aside, that was a decision, in fact, that had not been communicated or discussed with either municipality. Indeed, as I recall, Edmonton's mayor, Don Iveson, was about to board a plane, was about to leave the city for another conference. He had to turn around and come back from the airport to respond because this government failed to give any indication that it intended to tear up that campaign promise and to breach those significant agreements that had been negotiated and which a good deal of work had been put into putting in place with our two major cities. That's but one example, Madam Chair, of the incredibly condescending and paternalistic attitude with which this government, indeed this Ministry of Municipal Affairs has chosen to conduct itself in regard to municipalities.

It's not just our major cities either, Madam Chair. Indeed, I was just taking a little walk back in time here online. As recently as February the High River council took a stand against UCP cuts in its provincial payments to municipalities. As a form of protest against those funding changes, they voted to keep a government funding shortfall on the books as a receivable rather than writing it off. Indeed, the mayor of High River commented: what people have to understand is that this is too easy when you're talking provincial politics to just look at a spreadsheet and be a backseat accountant and start taking this stuff off to fix that bottom line number, but we have to understand that money has to be recouped from somewhere, and where it's going to come from is your residential taxes.

Indeed, we have seen with this government that often it likes to crusade on the fact that where it's not raising taxes on Albertans, it's more than happy to force other jurisdictions to do so on its behalf. This has been a problem we have seen with municipal governments across this province. Indeed, I know that many local councils, mayors, others have deep concerns with the decisions that this government chooses to make.

Now, what we have before us today is yet another example of where this Ministry of Municipal Affairs and indeed this government seem to see themselves fit to meddle in and control what municipalities choose to do. Despite their own personal penchant for increased independence and dislike for having any sort of meddling with their affairs or their decisions by the federal government, they seem intent on trying to increase their ability to do so with municipal governments here in the province of Alberta.

So we have here in Bill 13 a particular concern that we are trying to address with this amendment. Now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has indicated to this Chamber that these amendments were brought forward to the Emergency Management Act at the request of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Despite the decided acrimony that has been there in so many respects due to this government's incredibly condescending and paternalistic approach to these cities on so many issues, he is claiming that in this particular instance he is in fact trying to do us a solid, that he is doing exactly what the cities have asked him to do.

Now, I know that our Official Opposition has also consulted, and I know that my colleague from Calgary-*Buffalo* has done excellent work in continuing to keep in touch with the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary and indeed many jurisdictions across the province. He heard a somewhat different story. It was made quite clear to him that while this bill does do some of the things that cities have asked

for – so we do appreciate that there is a modicum of collaboration that is available between this minister and our municipalities – it also does some things that they very much oppose, which is something we also tend to see from this government. They tend to make very big, sweeping changes and throw one or two nice, cheerful things that people were looking for in on top of several things that people did not ask for and indeed do not support at all, which reminds me, again, of perhaps some of the recent attempts to repair some of the damage that they did by tearing up their contract with rural doctors and indeed doctors across the province of Alberta.

But, that aside, to be clear, the amendment that we have before us today is to address some of those things that municipalities have made very clear they do not support from this government. So if the intent of this minister was indeed to bring forward changes that were requested by the municipalities, it should be a simple thing to support this amendment, because this amendment is simply returning things to where municipalities would like them to be. They do not want this change being imposed by the minister. Indeed, the city of Calgary has been quite clear that this dramatic increase in powers for the minister over their city is not welcome. It's as welcome to the city of Calgary as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reaching his hand into Alberta is to members of this government. They've also been quite clear that it is, in fact, not needed. So this government is, despite the fact that it formed an entire ministry to address the removal of red tape, creating additional red tape on something where it is, in fact, not needed.

In our view and in consultation with legal experts, again we see the government going way too far with their emergency powers legislation, just like with Bill 10. Indeed, that's another example where I had the opportunity to stand in this House a short time ago – and I am, of course, not looking to re-debate the bill although I understand that the government, having recognized that, in fact, it did overstep its boundaries and facing a constitutional challenge on that front from one of the Premier's close friends and allies, is in fact planning to introduce some amendments to reconsider. So perhaps we can save the government some time here today. Rather than passing this legislation with this obvious and determined flaw in it, instead we simply pass this amendment now rather than having them have to come back, as they are going to have to do with Bill 10 in a matter of weeks, and say: "Whoops. Sorry. We made a mistake again, and we need to correct this."

Indeed, we could eliminate quite a bit of red tape by simply adopting this amendment today. Perhaps the government will see its way fit to do so. I think we're being quite reasonable in bringing this forward and simply saying that we want to make this change, that we simply want to set the legislation back to where it was, because it is quite clear that the municipalities do not want this change. They do not feel it is necessary; they do not see it as being needed. Indeed, the government has provided no clear reason why the minister needs to take this additional power unto himself.

Now, we have heard many times, as we've stood and taken the opportunity to speak about many decisions of this government, about how offended they are that we would bring things like this up in the midst of a pandemic and how dare we politicize the situation. Well, indeed, when we see the government taking unto itself powers which it cannot justify and cannot provide any clear reason for and which the people it affects say are not needed and are not wanted, I have to ask the same question in return. Why is this government choosing to take advantage of a global pandemic, as they did with Bill 10, to afford themselves extensive powers that are beyond what is needed by any government, frankly, in a democratic system? Why are they taking on such a fundamental overreach under the guise of a global pandemic, in the hopes that

Albertans are simply looking the other way and aren't going to hold them to account for doing so?

3:40

This amendment would simply limit the power of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify orders issued under a local state of emergency at his discretion while keeping the overall state of local emergency active. Now, again, Madam Chair, I respect that indeed the members of the government and these ministers were elected to this House, and I respect that they were appointed by the Premier and given the powers of a minister of the Crown. I respect that they have the right and ability to exercise those powers. However, I question them choosing to grant themselves additional powers with the subjective caveat of: at their discretion.

Madam Chair, we are here in this House today and we are debating this legislation because that is our job. When this government feels that it needs to make significant changes or that indeed it needs to make changes to even what another order of government has decided, I think that needs to rise to a greater standard than: at that minister's discretion because he or she feels like it. There needs to be some checks and balances. There needs to be some scrutiny. There needs to be a requirement that they are indeed going to work collaboratively. And it is not just this government. It is anybody who forms a government and acts as a minister in this province. I do not trust them simply at their own discretion. None of us should.

That is not the way democracy is intended to operate here in the province of Alberta, yet that is precisely the power that this government chose to afford itself in passing Bill 10 and has said that it's actually reconsidering at this point and intending to introduce some amendments to. We'll see how much of that egregious overreach of power this government chooses to roll back.

But I would say that if they want to restore any good faith with Albertans about what they intend to do with that bill, which, again, has launched a constitutional challenge, and rightfully so, if they want to demonstrate any good faith in their intent in what they hope to correct with that, then they will accept this amendment here today, which provides precisely the same sort of check and balance, simply to return the original language in the act, as we asked the government to do with Bill 10, a simple amendment which I had condescendingly and paternalistically explained to me by the Minister of Transportation at the time, about why I shouldn't worry my little head about it.

It is my job, Madam Chair, to worry about these things and to ask these questions on behalf of the people of Alberta. It is not my job to trust this government, and I can tell you that this government has given me many, many reasons not to trust them. But, as I said, I would not trust any government to afford themselves these powers and indeed the messages that it sends to our local municipalities about how little regard this government holds them in that they feel that the minister has to have the power at his discretion, simply because he personally feels like it, to go in and modify an order that they had passed, that he can't simply sit down and talk to a municipality and say: "Hey, there is a concern here. Can we chat about this? Maybe we can find a way to adjust this and work through the normal wheels of process and respect for jurisdictions and the processes of democracy." But, no, this government seems to feel that if there is an issue, the minister needs to have the ability, simply with a stroke of his pen at his or her personal discretion, to simply make it so.

That, to me, Madam Chair, does not pass the smell test. I don't think it does for many Albertans. I can tell you that I received a lot of e-mails about Bill 10 and the decision of this government to take that power unto itself for any minister, Madam Chair, in a state of

public emergency or a health emergency to simply allow themselves to change and adjust any piece of legislation, indeed to introduce entirely new legislation simply with the stroke of a pen at their discretion because they feel it's in the public interest.

Madam Chair, I think you know and I know that no member of this government would accept that from the federal government, certainly not the current federal government. Indeed, they were quite vocal when the federal government earlier attempted to afford itself what I also thought was an extreme overreach of power in its ability to spend and take a number of actions without the scrutiny of the House of Commons, and that was an appropriate reaction. Indeed, we saw all opposition parties in the federal government in Canada stand up to that government and say: no, that is not appropriate. They did not allow that to pass.

But then those same members are turning and sort of saying: "In this House, well, you know, we don't like it if it's them on us, but us with the other governments in the province of Alberta, the municipal governments, then that's just peachy-keen. That's A-okay. We can be trusted; they can't." Madam Chair, I believe in applying the same standard to all. I believe that in this situation it is not necessary for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to have the right to override the decision of any municipal government here in the province of Alberta in their declaration of a local state of emergency, that it is not appropriate and not needed for that minister, he or she, to take that power unto themselves to override the decision of that municipality, its elected representatives, in what they have determined is necessary for the jurisdiction under their responsibility in a state of local emergency.

Indeed, what we have seen with this government is that they seem to have a rampant inability to actually negotiate, collaborate, discuss. They seem unwilling. I don't know if they just can't be bothered. I don't know if they just simply lack the ability. I don't know if it's simply that the things that they want to do are so disliked by so many in Alberta that they can't actually sit down at a table and discuss them to get them done. Whatever the reason, Madam Chair, it is not acceptable to simply say that because we cannot or will not or do not want to approach things through the existing democratic means, through collaboration, through discussion, because we do not want to or are not willing to or are somehow unable to, we will simply pass a law saying that we can do it just because we want to. That is not acceptable to me. I don't believe that's acceptable to the people of Alberta.

That is why I am in support of this amendment brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo to remove that ability of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to . . .

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 13?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A2 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill. Are there any speakers wishing to speak to the main bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Yes. Madam Chair, I'd like to introduce a third amendment to Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2). I see the gentleman approaching to hand it to you. I'll wait until it gets to you.

3:50

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, this will be known as amendment A3. Please proceed.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will read it out to members of the House as they receive it also. It's on behalf of Ms Ganley that Bill 13, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), be amended in section 8 by adding the following immediately after the proposed section 24(1.03). It would be:

(1.04) If provisions of an order made under subsection (1.01) or (1.02) and a local authority's acts or proceedings taken under section 24(1) are inconsistent, the provisions of the order or the local authority's acts or proceedings that provide for more restrictive measures apply instead of those that provide for less restrictive measures to the extent of the inconsistency.

As I said, it's dated today, May 6, on behalf of Member Ganley from Calgary-Mountain View.

Madam Chair, to be clear and in plain language, in the case where both a state of local and provincial emergency coexist and where there is an order respecting the same issue, this amendment would ensure that the more restrictive order applies. As we've had an opportunity to spend time since the original introduction of Bill 13 both safe distancing from each other and talking to people virtually and on the phone, we have had the opportunity as a caucus to consult. As I said, this original tabling of Bill 13 was probably done around April 7, a couple of days before the first of the two amendments that we have debated on this already. This third amendment, known as A3 – as I said, we had the opportunity to talk to different local authority representatives, mayors and others, and to ask them what they thought about Bill 13. What I'll be sharing with you is the substance of those thoughts that led to this amendment.

I'd be remiss, though, Madam Chair, if I didn't of course think about that time elapsing since early April to now and think about what the COVID-19 pandemic has done to people in this province. Many have been infected and lost loved ones, unfortunately, and my thoughts and prayers, of course, go out to all of those Albertans who have been in that situation. Since the start of the pandemic we of course know that our brave front-line health care workers and responders and emergency personnel have been working day and night to keep us safe. These have been difficult times for them and their families, and I want to of course extend my appreciation to all of them who have been on the front lines.

The rest of us have, as our mayor says, you know, stayed healthy, stayed away, washed our hands, had good feelings and a good heart for others in the same situation and tried to be the best person we can be in these difficult times.

Our caucus has always committed to working with government to pass reasonable legislation in order to ensure that the government has the necessary authority to manage in this pandemic and emergencies generally. Of course, we're talking about the Emergency Management Amendment Act, and this Bill 13 is amending that act. We want to ensure that the government has the necessary authority, and we've put forward amendments to that end to make it better legislation.

Our support for any legislation is conditional on the government having done meaningful consultation. That's what my colleagues and I have been repeatedly bringing up: has there been meaningful consultation in that regard? When the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced this at second reading and talked about it – and I think you can go back to *Hansard* – he focused on the two cities, and we've been focusing on the two cities. As my colleague just said, you know, we're hearing different stories, and we want to ensure that we get it right, not have to come back to this House to work again on another amendment to the same act that we have been looking at in past times.

Of course, we want to ensure that there's meaningful consultation. Of course, we want to ensure that stakeholders are in full support. What we know, Madam Chair, is that that's not the case with regard to Bill 13, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2). Stakeholders are not in full support. We want to ensure, of course, and I'm sure every member of this House on the government side and this side wants to ensure that new powers are reasonable given the context and that our democratic institutions, which are not just in this House but across the province at local authorities – and there are hundreds and hundreds of local authorities across this province – are protected. That's why we do this work.

Of course, our support is always conditional on the government honestly and transparently informing this House of all aspects of their request for more power. My colleague was just talking about Bill 10 and how that test wasn't passed with regard to Bill 10. It's unfortunate that that condition, the condition of honestly and transparently informing this House of all aspects of their request for more power didn't meet that test.

With respect to Bill 13 we have also spoken to stakeholders, and we have offered amendments. I'm going to speak to that A3 amendment as I turn this page, and I want you to know that we will continue to operate with full and honest and unconditional integrity when we bring forward amendments to the emergency powers that are being added to and requested in this Legislature.

Again, in plain language, amendment A3. We are conscious that the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, (No. 2) could lead to cases where both states of local and provincial emergencies coexist at the same time, and we want it to be clear that when there is an order respecting the same issue, this amendment would ensure that the more restrictive order applies.

Madam Chair, as I've said, we have had the time since April 6, when we first started debating this, to speak to others. We have heard from those others, and amendments to Bill 13 have been brought forward. We've talked to Edmonton and Calgary, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs says that it's on their behalf that he brought the bill forward and that it codifies their specific request. But it's also clear to us that the minister responsible may not have got it totally correct when he talked to those stakeholders in Edmonton and Calgary. Indeed, I talked to stakeholders with regard to my first amendment that I brought forward, changing the time period to 30 days from the government's requested 90-day period for states of emergency. The stakeholders I talked to said that it was reasonable to go, you know, four times longer than the seven days that was in place but perhaps not as much as 90 days.

4:00

We as the Official Opposition have consulted, as I said, and we are bringing forward this amendment, which we believe is reasonable. This amendment, to be sure, would ensure that governments, both at the provincial level and the municipal level, can properly manage the pandemic today and more effectively manage emergencies into the future. Let me be clear. This amendment ensures that when both local and provincial states of emergency coexist and when orders are issued respecting that same issue, the order that is more restrictive applies. My colleague who I'm bringing this forward on behalf of, Member Ganley . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I'd just caution on the use of names in the Chamber.

Member Ceci: My colleague for Calgary-Mountain View. I'm bringing this forward on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

. . . indicated as a lawyer that where there are two jurisdictions in the same area that have similar laws, the more restrictive law is the one that is followed. So this is in keeping with that larger legal initiative.

We know that the evidence for this amendment is all around us. I, like many, many Albertans, tune in at the time that Dr. Hinshaw is giving her daily updates, and when I listen to the chief medical officer of health, I understand her to talk about the pandemic and where there are hot spots in different parts of the province and where there are not hot spots. In various parts of the province the incidence rates of COVID infection are different. It's differential. We know that with different incidence rates, at times there need to be different kinds of responses. In one area where there's a hot spot, we know that there has to be a lot of attention paid to the pandemic. In other, less impacted areas resources don't necessarily need to be trained on those areas.

As every Albertan knows at this point in time, the hot spots today are Calgary, Brooks, and High River. They've been hit hard by the pandemic, and our thoughts and prayers go out to those impacted in those areas who are dealing with that, both on the front lines and those who are negatively impacted, as their loved ones might be. We think it makes good sense that we might have more restrictive local orders to manage the pandemic in one part of the province than are required broadly for the whole province. If the whole province is not the focus or the locus of the problem, then it doesn't need to have the most restrictive kind of orders on the entire province.

Indeed, with last week's opening-up discussion of the Premier, we are beginning to think about some parts of the province that aren't impacted by COVID and what they might be doing differently than areas that are. To put that another way, what is needed right now in communities that have been hardest hit, for example those three communities I mentioned – Brooks, High River, and Calgary – is likely quite different than what is needed in other communities, perhaps, say, Grande Prairie.

As we've seen time and again with this pandemic, there are times when we need a differentiated response, and that's what the public health officials do daily when they contemplate, you know, their resources and where they need to put them most, where their public officials need to go, the investigations and the testing that need to be taking place. In a public health emergency, where there are orders in respect of that same issue, it's clear that the most restrictive order should apply, must apply. It's the only way to ensure public safety and public health and to communicate to the public one set of orders as opposed to potentially confusing people in the public.

We know that the municipal leaders in Calgary have asked for this amendment, and experts agree that this approach is eminently reasonable. We as the Official Opposition are somewhat surprised that the government hasn't already thought of this and brought it forward either as an amendment or in the original amending bill. We believe that the government appears to have rushed Bill 13, as we've seen by the need to put this bill before us, and it's titled the Emergency Management Amendment Act. We've seen this government rush other bills before us – and we've talked about those repeatedly this afternoon – Bill 10. The amendments that we put forward at that time, Madam Chair, were ignored by the government. We attempted to make that bill constitutional, and we are hearing that, because of pressure, this government will bring back Bill 10 to in fact make it constitutional, something that we argued at the time should happen.

We're asking our colleagues both on the government side and, of course, here to listen carefully to the arguments we're making, to read carefully through amendment A3 and think about this

amendment, and to join us in passing this amendment to ensure that governments at all levels in this province can better manage this pandemic and keep Albertans safe, essentially speaking with one voice as a government with the authority to address the pandemic in their local area.

We don't want to find ourselves in yet another situation, Madam Chair, where this government comes back to amend a bill respecting emergency powers, ignores the amendments we're bringing forward that reflect a tempering or a clarifying of what those powers should be, and then the government decides that they're mistaken, that they've been mistaken in the first place and they want to bring that legislation before the Assembly to get corrected. We think there is a better way, and that better way, of course, is to work together to pass reasonable amendments like this one.

Amendment A3, really, is following what best practice law is all about already. As my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View indicated to me and to us as a caucus of the Official Opposition, where there are two laws reflecting the same thing in a jurisdiction by different lawmaking bodies, the more restrictive law is the one that is utilized. That's what we're putting forward here, and it's in our section (1.04) on page 3 and follows section 24(1.03). It says that if the "local authority's acts and proceedings taken under section 24(1) are inconsistent," where they're inconsistent, the more restrictive measure would apply, and that's in best keeping with law. It's in best keeping with what's clear for people, and it makes greater sense for a person to think: "Okay. The tougher way of dealing is the way we should deal with it." This is a very, very challenging pandemic. We need to ensure that we don't relapse and get into a situation where we're seeing a flare-up of infection again.

Madam Chair, I, like probably everybody in the . . .

4:10

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 13 and the amendment as presented by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I also appreciate the comments that were just voiced by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo as well. Of course, that member has a unique and important perspective on issues regarding changes to the ability of municipalities to govern their communities as well as the relationship between the province and those municipalities. That member had a long history of working as a councillor, or as an alderman, I imagine, which was the title of it at that time, in the city of Calgary and then moving on to be the Minister of Municipal Affairs – excuse me; that's not right; it's going to be one of those days, apparently – the Minister of Finance but still a very relevant experience on these important issues. Of course, he had those discussions with the Minister of Municipal Affairs at that time on issues very similar to this.

It's very important for me to hear those comments, and I hope that the current Minister of Municipal Affairs is also listening and, hopefully, will have an opportunity to respond to this amendment that is before us. Once again, a previous member stated it a few times, but in just looking at this amendment, in the case where both a state of local and provincial emergency coexist, which we're seeing right now, and where there is an order respecting the same issue, the amendment that is before us would ensure that the more restrictive order applies.

I mean, this debate, of course, started in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now having had some time to digest Bill 13 and some of the changes that we've been proposing and in looking

at how COVID-19 has affected our community – even as early as yesterday, in the discussions that the mayor of Calgary, Mayor Nenshi, brought forward about his concerns about reopening, if the province decides to go forward, well, by the end of the month, the mayor has deep concerns about how that might affect the community.

The previous member, I think, made a very fair point about the fact that some communities will be affected differently than others. In Edmonton we've seen a reduced number of cases, as far as we can tell, whereas in Calgary – well, in both instances there are still concerns, of course, but in Calgary we're still seeing some very concerning numbers, so we need to be sure that when we do roll out these plans, it's not a one-size-fits-all approach, because the fact is that that's simply not going to be effective across the province.

I'd also like to echo some of the comments that were made by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre on the previous amendment, about the fact that we have grave concerns about this government, the UCP government, based on their history of a lack of consultation and, overall, just an overreach of the legislation in the past. I brought these concerns forward when I spoke to the previous amendment as well on changes to, I believe, Bill 9 and the compensation and the contracts that were before and being negotiated for health care providers. Then moving into Bill 10, once again the government was giving itself more power to pass legislation without potentially consulting with this Legislature. Really, the list goes on and on. The change of heart from this government on the city charter agreements that were brought forward by the NDP government at the time and were committed to by the UCP through the campaign: once they were elected, the Municipal Affairs minister decided to rip up that agreement.

Even discussions around reducing crime in our community and ensuring proper policing across municipalities: the Minister of Justice made a commitment to those communities that we would see increased dollars to those communities. Well, we didn't see that. We saw reallocations in certain instances, and even further we saw that minister scaling back the ability of those municipalities to spend money that they were collecting from things like photoradar and tickets. Once again with this government they say one thing and they do another, and it's very concerning in situations like this, where we are thinking about the health of our province and the sacrifices that workers in our community are making every single day and the plans that this government is talking about rolling out. Unfortunately, we have many questions and the public has many questions.

Workers: just as far back as this week we had discussions with hair salon workers and owners and other small businesses across the province, and they are very concerned. Of course, they want to get back to work. They want to make sure that their workers have a paycheque and, of course, that they have a paycheque, but the fact is that the most important thing right now is the health of our community. When the UCP government is talking about reopening as many businesses as possible, people have questions, and unfortunately we are not getting answers from them.

Once again, we are deeply concerned with Bill 13, the changes that this government is proposing, that when a municipality comes to the table with the provincial government and says, "Look, we understand that you have these guidelines, but the fact is that our municipality is just not ready to open up the same way that you want us to," well, the fact is that municipality at the end of the day should have an equal voice if not a potentially louder voice. When we look at the three levels of government, of course, each of them plays an important role, but if a municipality is saying that they don't think it's time to loosen these restrictions, then I think that they should probably have the authority to do that. They were elected to

represent their local communities just like we were, for different reasons, of course, but they also should be a valued partner at that table. Unfortunately, that is not necessarily what we're seeing with Bill 13, and that is why we're asking this government to reconsider the things that they're putting forward.

I think, once again, as the Member for Edmonton–City Centre put it, the fact is that we will more than likely see this government come back to the Legislature on Bill 10 because of questions about if it's within the Constitution or within their power to do some of the changes that they've made. We will hear more about that very shortly, I imagine.

The fact is that Bill 13, once again, is also a form of red tape, and I think that has been laid out quite clearly. The fact is that we've raised many important questions about the consultations or lack thereof from this minister. We've raised concerns about the fact that municipalities have brought forward concerns that they have with the legislation as presented before us. Unfortunately, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs has stood up, he has been unwilling to recognize that there are concerns in the first place. He said: everything is a hundred per cent; all of the municipalities are onboard, everything is good to go, and you guys are fearmongering in the opposition. But the fact is that that's simply not the case.

If this UCP government truly wants our support, then we are happy to work together to get to a place where we can support this legislation. The first step is working with us or at least discussing in the first place these amendments that are before us. Unfortunately, besides the Minister of Municipal Affairs standing up and saying that we're wrong and no municipality has ever questioned anything that he's ever done, we have heard very little, if anything, from that minister on these important issues. Once again, just like the public, the NDP opposition has important questions on this legislation, on the government's vision of reopening the economy as best as possible. Of course, we support that vision as well, but we want to make sure that it's not to the detriment of the health of our communities, and that should be the number one concern for everyone.

Once again, you know, we see throughout this legislation the incredible power that this government is trying to give themselves to be able to make decisions on behalf of municipalities, who are equally elected to govern their community or be representatives of their community. We see in this legislation under different sections the extension of the amount of time that this government wants to give themselves before having to renegotiate or rediscuss these states of emergency, which is a very important concern that we have as well, because, once again, this government seems like they're doing their best to not have to consult with anyone about anything, and that's very concerning.

The fact is that at a time like the time before us right now, a time of a pandemic, we should be working extremely hard to consult with those municipalities, with workers in our community and business owners, and unfortunately it does not seem like that is the prerogative of this government. I really hope that that conversation changes because we need to come together at this time. The fact is that when we ask questions about, you know, the health and safety of our communities, about visions of this government, about reopening as best as possible, it is not fearmongering, as this government and many of the ministers even today in question period tried to state. The fact is that people have questions, and our responsibility as an opposition is to get answers to those questions, but unfortunately this government is simply not prepared to provide those answers, which is very concerning for all of us.

4:20

Once again, I have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 13 now a few times, and I really hope that the minister responsible for this legislation and the members that are working with that minister can really respect the fact that this is an important conversation that we need to get right. I think that we can, once again, come to a place of agreement if we could see some of these changes that we're proposing accepted by this government. The fact is that this amendment, as brought forward by the Member for Calgary–Mountain View, is the right thing to do, and I hope that this government will do the right thing and accept it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton–McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to amendment A3, which I think is a fairly common-sense amendment. We've heard that, indeed, it's a principle of the common law that where we do have overlapping jurisdictions creating law in the same subject and applied during emergency measures, the jurisdiction with the most restrictive statute is the one whose law will supersede the other. It's just simply abiding by that common-law principle, according to legal opinion that I've heard. Of course, I'm not a lawyer, but common-law principle dictates historically and by precedent that the jurisdiction with the more restrictive overlapping measures will be the one that will supersede and predominate. That being said, I think it's a reasonable thing to expect that one would want, particularly in an emergency situation, the more restrictive statute to be the one that has precedence. We know, of course, that during the pandemic that we're all going through right now, in different communities they're affected by community outbreaks of the disease that have been initially seen in the packing plants that are either in or close to the communities where these outbreaks occur.

[Mr. Barnes in the chair]

We know today for a fact that we've had a second death related to the COVID-19 outbreak at Cargill. The father of a plant worker at Cargill visiting from the Philippines died on May 5. Our condolences to the family there; a very, very tragic situation where an older man from the Philippines visiting his family contracted the virus as a result of community spread. He certainly didn't come here to die. He actually passed away as a result of contracting the disease that was found to be in the plant at Cargill, close to High River. That's a situation, I wonder, Mr. Chair, if indeed we could have prevented had this type of an amendment been in place and had communities such as High River or Brooks or even Calgary, where they have a packing plant close by, where you have packing plants or other places such as the parcel plants such as Amazon or Purolator, where we have these outbreaks that occur and where the provincial government fails to act, where the company fails to listen to the other party involved, particularly the working people who are in those plants, when an outbreak occurs in those plants and workers are getting sick, when a province actually fails to act, could we not then see, given this legislation, a situation where the communities, the cities like High River, the cities like Brooks or Calgary itself, enact their own legislation which says that those workers must be listened to?

In other words, we're listening to them when they're telling us that they need private transportation that makes them safe getting to and from the plants so they don't need to carpool. We need safe places for them to live, to self-isolate so they're not having to go home, bringing the disease to family members, so that a visiting

father from the Philippines doesn't catch the disease. They can't afford otherwise to have other accommodations, but we as a municipality are going to pass legislation that supersedes the provincial legislation that protects these workers. This amendment would allow that to happen so that those workers could have some measure of protection from some level of government that actually thinks their safety and their lives are worth protecting.

I think this amendment is so germane to exactly what we're talking about today, where people are dying because the legislation doesn't exist to protect the workers who are begging for somebody to come to their aid and help them from the situation they face at work, where this provincial government refuses to force the company and, in fact, makes fun of a situation where the union is demanding that they indeed are at the table. What we want to make sure is that those voices are heard and, as the union has been demanding, that they have a voice heard. This amendment would give the municipalities the opportunity to say: "Hey. We've got a serious problem in our community. We have many people who are sick who are in the plant. These people live in our community, and we want to pass legislation that's actually going to alleviate the situation, that's going to help get these people to and from work safely without transmitting the disease one to the other or to their family members."

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

In this particular case, had these municipalities been able to pass legislation or laws that would have superseded the provincial government's legislation, then in fact they perhaps could have forced the company to pay for busing or self-isolation housing for these workers so that they would be remaining safe during this period of outbreak, you know, notwithstanding the fact that, of course, the government wanted to give themselves power to go and delve in to perhaps do away with that type of a measure should a municipality go ahead and be so bold as to enact it.

I'm just thinking to myself today, as I look at the second death related to the Cargill plant, a Filipino man comes to visit his sons and grandkids and dies while visiting the country, and wonder what could have been done to have prevented that, if indeed governments would have reacted and the company would have seen the value of looking long term and involving the workers of that plant, taking their advice, taking advantage of opportunities of time to put in place solutions such as busing and safe transportation and isolation housing and different measures within the plant and accepting those workers as meaningful and respectfully listening to what they had to say as an equal partner when they were demanding it for weeks in advance of the actual pandemic outbreak in the plant. If, indeed, the municipality had the opportunity to listen to those workers and enact legislation, maybe some of this would have been avoided. Some of the transmission would have been avoided. Some of the deaths might have been avoided, future deaths might be avoided, and a lesson learned, perhaps, that governments who listen to the people who are involved directly will be rewarded in future. Those who don't are going to be seriously questioned.

My heart goes out, once again, to the Filipino community, who suffered another loss. They deserve to have their voices listened to very respectfully as well as all of the other workers and the families that they go home to at night in a situation that they feel powerless in. Perhaps if the provincial level of government won't enact legislation to protect them and respect them in their workplaces, we should empower the level of government at the municipal level to do just that and maybe teach us all a lesson.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank my colleagues for their comments, in particular my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. I'd like to build on his point a little bit. It's the first time I've risen to speak since our break, and I wanted to take a couple of minutes to also express my condolences to all Albertans who've lost loved ones due to COVID and, of course, point out as well that we're just so grateful for the service of all those who are on the front lines, all those who are working in essential services. We know that day in and day out you're doing so much for all of us, and we need to show you our gratitude in more than just, you know, making noise for you. We need to ensure that you will have supports moving forward, including a fair wage, including benefits, including job security. The list goes on. Thank you to all those out there.

4:30

I want to make special mention as well of the folks who've passed away connected to the Cargill plant. Hiep Bui was the first worker who passed away due to COVID at Cargill, and she was known for her kindness, her humour, her warm smile. She worked at Cargill for 24 years. She was a real person who had family and friends, a dedicated husband who loved her so, so much. Sadly, Cargill didn't call her husband to express their sympathy. She deserved better than that. I think her death just gives us an opportunity to reflect on what really matters, and I think it brings up questions of morality and how we want to envision our collective future as we move forward out of this pandemic. As I've said in the House before, you know, one quote that I've heard in the last number of weeks as we've been in the midst of this pandemic is just that basically the biggest tragedy will be if we come out of this pandemic unchanged. I worry that we won't shift our practices, we won't shift the way we treat each other and the way we treat those workers, who do so much for our province. Again, my sincere condolences to Hiep Bui's family.

As well, as my colleague from Edmonton-McClung just shared, there has been an additional death, and that death was related to Cargill. The person who passed away there, as he noted, was a father of one of the workers from the Philippines, again, as my colleague stated so aptly, I mean, someone who certainly didn't expect to find himself in those circumstances. Again, as we move forward with our decisions in this House, let's think about all those who've lost their lives and all those family members and friends who mourn and will continue to mourn.

What I'd like to do is speak a little bit to Bill 13, to the amendment specifically. I should note that I've actually spoken to Bill 13 a couple of times, and I'm thinking, as I hear the comments from – interestingly, again, it's almost like *déjà vu* a little bit here because it seems to be our side of the House that is speaking to this bill, and I've not heard from the other side. You know, we've talked a lot about consultation. I'm remembering my comments from previous days here in the House on Bill 13, just how the members opposite speak so much about the importance of consultation and have painted us with a brush of not being very consultative. We've said all along that our support of this legislation, Bill 13 in particular, is contingent on a number of factors, one of those factors being that meaningful consultation has been done and having stakeholders in full support, ensuring that any powers are reasonable, ensuring that our essential, fundamental, democratic institutions are protected, and, of course, that there is clear, you know, transparency and honesty in the approach of this government.

As my fantastic colleague from Calgary-Buffalo has talked about, you know, he's had a number of conversations. I know he's been on the phone a lot, and this third amendment that we bring forward – I mean, I was disappointed to see that the second amendment was not supported by this government. This third amendment was an ask from the city of Calgary, and this third amendment came about due to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo's conversations, from other members of our caucus who've reached out to key stakeholders and municipalities across this province. We don't bring this forth as any sort of, you know, partisan tool. It's truly something that many Albertans would understand and would benefit from. If we're not listening to the major stakeholders, if we're not listening to the major players, then what are we doing?

I guess my hope – well, my first hope, of course, is that the government will support this quite reasonable amendment. My second hope is that if perchance they do not, maybe we will hear from some of the members in this House because it's possible – I'm willing to be gracious today – that they have heard otherwise from other stakeholders. If this is the case, again, I would ask them, particularly those members perhaps from Calgary – but others as well are free to join – to just talk about what they have heard and if it is different. Again, we're in this House, you know, as my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre has talked about, because this government has said that it's important to pass legislation that will benefit Albertans during COVID. Okay. We're here. We're in this House. We've got incredible staff who are supporting us. Let's do the right thing. Let's pass legislation that we know is based on meaningful, robust consultation. Let's pass legislation that we know our stakeholders support.

I did hear that there was an amendment on a different bill this morning that was, in fact, supported by this government, an amendment that we put forth on Bill 8, I believe. That's promising, that this government was willing to accept that amendment. I would again encourage those folks opposite to speak up and just share your perspective so that we can understand and the folks watching at home can understand as well.

About this amendment specifically, as has been outlined, we know that with amendment A3, in the case where both a state of local and provincial emergency co-exist and where there is an order respecting that same issue, the amendment would ensure that the more restrictive order applies. Again, we know that some of the major cities have asked for this, and this bill will codify their asks, again, my concern being that we based this amendment on a heck of a lot of consultation. As I said, I'm so proud of my colleagues, in particular from Calgary-Buffalo, for the consultation that I know he's done.

This amendment would ensure that governments, both at the provincial and the municipal levels, can properly manage the pandemic and can prepare them as we manage future emergencies because as much as I would hope that – you know, where 2020 has been a heck of a rollercoaster, and our heart goes on to folks experiencing flooding, we know that there may be other future disasters, right? There's been a lot to manage right now, and municipalities around this province need clarity. Not only do they need clarity; they need to know that they have been consulted and that their voices are reflected in the legislation put forth.

To be clear, this amendment ensures that when both a local state of emergency and a provincial state of emergency exist, which we know is happening in many cases, when any order is issued that is related to the same issue, of course, the order that is more restrictive applies. We see this evidence all around us, as some of my colleagues have talked about. Our chief medical officer of health, for instance, has talked about the differences in incidence rates in various parts of the province. We know that with different incidence

rates there will be a time where we need differentiated responses, where we need exactly what we're outlining in amendment A3: a more restrictive local approach. We know – and we've talked about this – that sadly a few areas that we can highlight as specific hot spots around the province are Calgary, Brooks, and High River.

It just makes good sense that we have more restrictive local orders in place. Those local communities know the needs of their communities. I've talked about this before. I've spent more of my life in rural Alberta than I have in the city, in various communities. I've lived in Barrhead, I've lived in Camrose, I've lived in Forestburg: some of the major metropolises around this province. My point being that the needs of Bawlf, Alberta, are very different than the needs of my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, right? Those municipalities need to know that they will have the ability to make the call on issues that are local to them, issues that are important to their local context.

4:40

We've seen other times where a differentiated approach has been needed, and a public health emergency isn't a time to experiment, isn't a time, you know, for the province to weigh in on a local state, when, again, I'm certain that – you know, I trust our folks that are working in emergency response management, absolutely, but those folks on the ground in those communities, working in those municipalities know their communities best.

Given that municipal leaders have asked for this amendment and experts agree and the folks we've consulted agree that this approach is very much reasonable, we're actually a little bit surprised that the government not only didn't bring forth this amendment; also, like I said, I've not heard anyone speak to this. Again, I'm all ears. I'm certainly not an expert when it comes to emergency management – that's for sure – so I'm hoping to hear from some members in government so they can kind of weigh in and explain to me why this amendment might not be necessary. I'd like to learn. I'd absolutely like to learn.

But, as we know and as my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre so elegantly stated, we've seen this government in other circumstances very much rush their legislation and push it forward without giving consideration to amendments. Now, I was in the House for our conversations on Bill 10, and, you know, it's not to say, "We told you so," but, heck, I remember the conversations we had and the amendments that we brought forth on Bill 10 and raised a lot of concerns. It was disappointing to see, again, in that case, multiple cases in the House that this government wasn't willing to entertain our amendments, yet we now know that there have been critics of Bill 10, including critics who have historically been supportive of the United Conservative government, who have said that, absolutely, this bill needs to change and is unconstitutional, and now, of course, this government is going to be very much changing Bill 10.

I ask our colleagues opposite to avoid a similar situation as we move forward here. This is an easy amendment to make to the bill. Again, it's one that has been asked for by the major municipalities. This will be a way to very much ensure that we can better manage the pandemic. Again, I don't want to see ourselves in another situation where we are, you know, back in the Legislature fully changing a bill when we could have simply passed this amendment in the first place.

To recap, I urge the members opposite to very much support our amendment, our third amendment to the Emergency Management Amendment Act and listen to the voices of those from whom we've heard. Listen to the voices of those that we've consulted. Again, I would urge the members opposite: if you've heard otherwise, speak now, please. Share those concerns because when we come back and

if the government fails to accept our amendment on this, I know that myself and my colleagues will get questions as to why such a reasonable amendment was not supported. Again, I urge the members opposite to speak now, to share their concerns, to talk about who they've consulted, and I urge them as well to, of course, accept this third amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A3 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill, Bill 13. Are there any speakers wishing to speak to the Bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 13.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you. I would ask that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by 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.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

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

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs to move third reading of Bill 13, which provides additional amendments to the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020.

In response to the changes we introduced to the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020, on March 20, we have worked with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary to develop further changes

that would assist with the pandemic response. These proposed additional changes include providing a longer duration for local states of emergency during a pandemic and clarifying that it is an offence to not comply with orders made under states of local emergency or a provincial state of emergency.

We also realized that additional changes were required to clarify the powers of a minister with respect to local states of emergency. On this point there are four amendments. First, to align states of local emergency with provincial states of emergency from a duration of seven days to 90 days. This change recognizes the unique emergency situation demanded in a pandemic response. Second, to clarify that electronic council meetings can be used to pass resolutions for local states of emergency. This change offers flexibility to councils and aligns with the current restrictions on public gatherings. Third, to provide the Minister of Municipal Affairs with the authority to modify a local state of emergency without terminating it. This change will ensure that local states of emergency align with provincial direction without terminating them. Finally, fourth, to clarify that it is an offence to defy an order during a state of emergency. Currently the act only allows for enforceability of evacuation orders. This clarification will ensure that all orders in an emergency are enforceable.

If passed, this bill will provide greater clarity and improve co-ordination between local and provincial responses to the COVID-19 epidemic and future province-wide emergencies.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 13 on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 13 in third reading? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: I appreciate that, Madam Speaker. You know, the unintended consequences are something that I want to touch on with regard to this bill, and I'll get to that in a minute. The lack of consultation with local authorities is another thing I want to get to with regard to this bill. This bill: it's my contention that it's not really required during this pandemic response given the powers extended already through changes in Bill 10 to the Public Health Act, the emergency powers section there, which allows changes through ministerial order. That said, the bill before us, Bill 13, allows local states of emergency to last up to 90 days now as opposed to seven.

4:50

One of the things that I do agree with is the council meetings being held by electronic means. If they're held by electronic means, as is proposed in this bill, you know, it's not such a big deal to extend the local state of emergency. I know Calgary is already holding their council meetings through Skype or whatever platform they're using or teleconferencing. They're already doing that. The fact that they can bring up during the course of their regular council meetings a desire to extend their local state of emergency longer: if it stayed at seven days, that would not be a big issue.

The growth in that time period, from seven days to 90 days, is one that has been worrying this side of the House, the Official Opposition. I'm just not sure why our first amendment, which talked about that increase from seven days to 90 days, where we were trying to amend it down to 30 days, wasn't supported. You know, it's along the lines of: let's not find out what those unintended consequences are; let's walk before we run.

Nonetheless, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said that it was something that he proposed, and no one really thought it was a bad thing although I'm conscious that they probably weren't asking for it. What they really need at the local level is not something the

Minister of Municipal Affairs is delivering in this case. What they really need, as our Official Opposition put forward, in terms of proposals to relaunch our economy is support, fiscal support.

Of course, other parts of this bill clarify language that it is an offence to be noncompliant with orders made under a local or provincial state of emergency. It seems reasonable to clarify and to make things clear so that people both at the local authority level and the provincial government and the emergency management people in the provincial government all are operating under the same understanding with regard to what noncompliance really means with respect to orders during an emergency.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We have of course brought forward amendments that we thought were entirely reasonable that we believe passed the test both at the local level and the provincial government level, and I'm going to be talking about some of those right now.

The third power that was identified, a major bucket of powers that were identified, in this Bill 13 was providing new powers to the minister to modify or disallow any orders made by a local authority. I know the minister said in the original debate that he would be in consultation with municipalities about those things, that there's this good two-way, back-and-forth relationship he has with municipalities across this province. But I can tell you that when you look through Bill 13, it doesn't say the words "in consultation," that I'm aware of. I thought that that would be a good thing to insert, particularly on page 3, where section (1.02) talks about: "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 it seems like if he really was interested in consulting with municipalities, local authorities, those words would be in this amendment to the Emergency Management Act, but they're not, Mr. Speaker.

The words "in consultation with local authorities" do not show up, which, frankly, is concerning for me because people at the local government level in many instances, in most instances, know what the situation is that they're dealing with and the fixes that will improve their local situation. While the minister can argue that, you know, he would – it's kind of in his makeup – work with local authorities and local governments to fine-tune orders to the local areas, we don't see it in legislation. So if we don't see it in legislation, then we have to worry that there will be consequences that won't be experienced by the minister but will be experienced by the local government.

I do think that I need to put this in the context of recognizing that this is a situation none of us have been in in terms of the pandemic, and I want to recognize the effort that the cabinet emergency committee is struggling with with regard to COVID, with regard to the flooding in northern Alberta, and with regard to the impacts on our economy as a result of this pandemic reverberating around the world. They, of course, are active, probably several times weekly, maybe even daily, as an emergency group, and they're trying to do the best that they can with a situation that they have never been faced with, both as individuals in their personal lives or as government officials, and the efforts that they are trying to undertake to lead this province back to a semblance of normalcy, growth, and health.

I believe that there are current laws on the books in this province, like the Public Health Act, that are adequate or could be beefed up to deal with the situation we're in, and subsequently I don't believe that the amendments to the Emergency Management Act were necessary. As I said, in the conversations I've had with folks, they

think the Public Health Act could have done the job they're faced with. The statement that was made to me by an individual who knows the Public Health Act, who knows the local governance situation is that if you run too fast with these kinds of things, you'll stumble and fall. We saw that in Bill 10. This government stumbled and fell. They will be bringing back before us efforts to clean up the problems that were created with Bill 10.

With regard to amendment A3, that we brought forward, that subsequently was not supported by the government, we know that with those concurrent declarations of states of emergency, if there is confusion about which restrictions should apply, that is not a good thing for members of the public. We argued here just a few minutes ago that the most restrictive initiatives under a state of emergency should be the ones followed. We thought that was eminently reasonable – we know that in the legal profession similar kinds of undertakings are agreed to and followed – but that wasn't supported by the government.

5:00

We, of course, listened to the arguments made by ministers and others. We listened to him say that, you know, all of these changes to the Emergency Management Act were requested of him. We argued that we also listened to municipal leaders, and we heard a different story. We believe that the government has done some of the things that were requested, but in other things they have gone beyond that. That was our effort to bring forward amendments A1, A2, A3, to ensure that there was some tweaking, there was some understanding of the overreach we believe was in the bill and what one person in government said was: try to run too fast, and the government will stumble. We think the government has given themselves more power over municipalities, and municipal leaders do not appreciate those things. We don't think that there should be more power over municipalities in this regard and in the Emergency Management Amendment Act.

We want to voice that concern, and we have over the last times when we've been able to deal with this bill in this House. As I said before, I can remember – and I think it was just brought up – that this was originally introduced on March 20. I brought subsequent amendments on April 8, I think it was. It was April 8. I brought two amendments on April 8, and here we are on May 6. So we've had a good amount of time to reflect on this bill, to talk to people, and to understand what issues and concerns they might have. As an opposition we feel we have done those folks right by bringing those forward. We know that there are some concerns from Calgary with respect to the amendment that we just brought forward with regard to A3. There are other concerns they had. Not all of those have made it into our amendments, but we wanted to do the right thing by those who believe that there's an overreach here, and that's what we've brought forward.

I, of course, want to say that we will get through this pandemic. We will come out the other end: Albertans, this House. In places all across this province peoples' focus is on repairing what's gone on, making sure people are safe, and getting through the other side. I appreciate the work of government and the committees that they have in that regard, but I don't want us to pass laws that aren't necessary at this time. I want us to keep our eye always on the ball and always on ensuring that lives are saved. I think we can do that with the current Public Health Act, and we can beef that up if necessary. I think we can do that with the current committees of cabinet that are working daily, probably, to ensure that we get through the other end.

The Official Opposition caucus is similarly working with Albertans to find ways to improve the actions not only of government: the actions of local governments, the actions of

professional associations. We're meeting with them, we're talking with them, and the things they tell us, of course, we've been putting down on our approach to the pandemic, on our approach to reopening the economy, and I'm just not sure that spending time on Bill 13 is going to get us there. I think we had enough power in the existing laws of the land that we don't need Bill 13 before us.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I hoped that some of the amendments that were put before us, my two and one from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would have been supported, would have been seen as reasonable. We thought they were. We thought they bore the imprint of people we talked to throughout Alberta, and we did our best in that regard. We, of course, have listened to and are trying to always improve legislation. I think anything that helps coordinate local officials with the province of Alberta is a good thing. There may be an aspect of that here, but overall I don't see it. I think anything that clarifies language around the offence of non-compliance made under a local or a provincial state of emergency is a good thing, and I've given that kudos to government for doing that. The fact that councils can meet electronically to pass states of emergency is another thing that I think will be helpful to them, especially in these social distancing times.

I don't believe that we need to cede more authority to the provincial government. If that authority is not in consultation and it's not in writing, then I think there is a problem because the local officials are professionals, just as people in this Legislature endeavour to be every day. They're professionals at what they do, and we have to kind of imbue them with the same respect that we give each other in this House on a daily basis. So the powers to the minister are a problem in my book and, I believe, also a problem to local authorities throughout this province.

The few last things I'd like to say are to recognize that, you know, Albertans look to their officials to help guide them through these really difficult times, and I think they can count on all members of this House to provide that leadership. Whether they're Official Opposition members, as we are, or members of government or private members of government, they can be assured that we're focused on the pandemic, focused on their health and recovery and the economy, and that we want to see us get back to a place where we lead this nation in economic growth. It's going to take some time, admittedly, but I know there's a desire for all of us to get back to that place. That's the same view shared by local governments, and they should be respected for their wishes as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 13?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by thanking all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have contributed to

debate on Bill 13. I think that this is what this House is meant for, which is to provide an opportunity for all of us, elected by our various constituencies, to provide our input and contributions to bills like this. I do want to thank all of us who have participated in this spirited debate. Let me also thank the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer and indeed the AUMA and RMA, who provided their support for Bill 13.

5:10

Contrary to what the members opposite have represented to this particular House in the course of this particular debate, this was a bill that was instigated by the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer with support from AUMA, who are on record, on the main provisions of Bill 13, publicly in support. You know, on the requirement to extend to 90 days, the AUMA wrote on April 8 that they

fully support the provincial government's April 7 announcement about amending the Emergency Management Act. The extension of local states of emergency for up to 90 days are a necessary . . .

Not my word but the AUMA's: "necessary."

. . . step to respond to Alberta's evolving situation.

On the ability of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to modify rather than to terminate, they wrote, again on April 8, contrary to the members opposite's submission before this House:

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.

They also said:

We've been supportive of many of the provincial government's legislative modifications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Broadly speaking, there's consensus, so that is why I was baffled by some of the arguments made by members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, let me also thank all of our emergency workers, our public health care workers and officials for their tremendous hard work during this time of uncertainty. There is no question in my mind that all of them, our municipalities and those who work on the front lines, require from their government all of the tools that they need to ensure that all of us and our communities, working with our municipalities, overcome this deadly unseen enemy called the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to once again thank all of us who have contributed to this particular debate. With that, I close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader, perhaps.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, May 7, at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:14 p.m.]

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