



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 1, 2020

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Second Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Singh

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Issik  
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Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
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Rosin  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 1, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we will be led in the singing of the national anthem by Brooklyn Elhard. In observation of the COVID-19 public health guidelines by Dr. Hinshaw, please refrain from joining her in the language of your choice.

**Ms Elhard:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons 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.

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Ministerial Statements

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

### Seniors' Week

**Ms Pon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to recognize Seniors' Week, which continues through Sunday. In Alberta we set aside the first week of June to celebrate our most cherished citizens during Seniors' Week. For 34 years it has been a wonderful Alberta tradition. Today we also celebrate Intergenerational Day, which promotes rich and sustainable connections between the generations and reduces ageism.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has changed the way we celebrate Seniors' Week, and I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends who have lost a loved one during COVID-19.

In past years we have recognized seniors at barbecues, tea parties, and all types of social events in seniors' centres, lodges, and community halls throughout the province. This year pandemic-related restrictions have prevented these types of large gatherings. These restrictions have not prevented us from celebrating Seniors' Week. Albertans are finding fun, creative, and innovative ways to celebrate. They are using technologies to stay connected with the seniors in their lives. Grandchildren are showing off their dancing skills and their singing skills through the videos they are sending to their grandparents. Some communities are parading past their seniors' lodges and ensuring social distancing by waving to residents.

Many people are offering to pick up groceries, run errands, and are taking care of other tasks for the seniors in their lives or the seniors who live down the block. Mr. Speaker, it all matters. It all

makes a difference. It proves that the spirit of Seniors' Week is ever stronger.

Seniors' Week is also recognizing and celebrating all that seniors have contributed to making our families, communities, and province so much stronger. Alberta has a strong, active, and growing seniors population of more than 640,000. These seniors are vital members of our communities, and they make a difference in our daily lives. Seniors lived through difficult times, and they have much to share with us. We cannot all be together, Mr. Speaker, but we will make sure that all seniors feel vital to family, friends, and Albertans.

I'm proud of the way Albertans are recognizing seniors. I'm grateful for the work of senior-serving organizations and those who operate seniors' lodges and other seniors' residences. They are doing a great job, and together we are making Seniors' Week 2020 safe and fun for our seniors. As I say all the time, Mr. Speaker, seniors are the strength of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to respond on behalf of the opposition.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we failed to receive notice about the ministerial statement today, it's my honour to rise and speak in response to it either way because, absolutely, the Alberta NDP and our caucus fully believe that seniors are important members of the Alberta community and deserve nothing but the most respect and to be a priority for this government and any government.

Certainly, we've been calling for many weeks now, and months indeed, to put seniors as a top priority during the COVID pandemic by ensuring that there are staff only working in one facility, staff that ensure that they are not spreading illness. Of course, no staff member ever intends to do that, but we know that for many, many years, through a model that has pushed privatization in this province, there have been staff who have to put together piecemeal contracts between many facilities because full-time contracts haven't been awarded in many of the private care facilities. So this is an area that has been of particular focus for us during the last few months and will continue to be an area that we advocate for.

As well, in our platform we made a clear commitment to eliminate the fees that seniors pay for their drug coverage, fees that right now go as high as \$25 per prescription, which many seniors have told us has meant hundreds of dollars out of their own pocket on a regular basis. Of course, now the government has brought in a cap on how frequently you can get medications. I understand that that was done to ensure that we don't have shortfalls in the number of prescriptions available, but that means that seniors are paying the copay even more frequently. They used to pay it once every three months, and now they're having to pay it more frequently because they can only get 30 days' supply, many of them have told us, and so have many pharmacists. So there is great concern that this government has put more burdens on seniors, more cost pressures on seniors during this time of pandemic rather than stepping up and having their backs.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to fight for and to work with the Alberta seniors who live in this province and who continue to contribute every day. We respect them, and we honour their contributions both in the past and in the present, and we want to make sure that we have an Alberta that works for all Albertans, including every senior.

I personally want to take this moment to say that it was my mom's birthday on the weekend. She is definitely a senior, and I am so grateful that she is still a member of this province. I don't care if she hits the average life expectancy; I want her to live forever.

Thank you to the members for an opportunity to say this, and happy birthday, Mom.

1:40

## Members' Statements

### COVID-19 Response

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, during the past few months Albertans have been hard at work fighting back against the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Albertans have made tremendous sacrifices. To those that have lost a loved one: our sincere and deepest sympathies go out to you and your families. We also cannot thank enough the hard work and dedication of our health care workers, especially front-line workers, who have unselfishly put themselves in harm's way to protect and defend us against this terrible virus.

To my fellow Albertans: I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your tremendous personal sacrifices. To business owners, especially the small-business owners: we cannot express enough the pride we feel from your strong spirit to overcome this hardship and fight back to regain your businesses. To employees, teachers, students, and many others who stayed home to help protect the vulnerable in our society: it is your actions that helped flatten the curve and saved countless lives.

Unfortunately, the battle is not over yet. It'll take many more months, maybe more years to fully recover from this and return to a normal way of living, but I am emboldened by the strong and determined spirit of all Albertans, who demonstrated once again that in a time of crisis we stand together and unite to overcome the challenges we face as we fight for a common goal.

I encourage everyone to take time to thank their friends, families, and neighbours for their efforts. From curbside birthday celebrations to manufacturing homemade PPEs, no contribution should be unrecognized. Once again, thank you to all Albertans. Thank you for any contributions you made. Thank you for helping us show the world what it truly means to be Albertan.

Thank you.

### Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, parents across Alberta overwhelmingly choose public education. They do this year after year, and they would also like to be able to choose reasonable class sizes, educational assistants for students who have special needs, a modern curriculum, mental health supports, and, of course, no new fees. Parents did not choose the cruel cuts that have been rolled out by this Premier and his UCP caucus because they did not campaign on this during the election. Last year during the election they said the exact opposite. Now what is going on is a push to bring in more American-style education, with less oversight and less funding, and that is wrong.

This government has already fired more than 20,000 educational workers. The Premier says that taxpayers can't afford educational assistants, but then later we learned that he believes that taxpayers should afford to pay for his political staff and their operations, Mr. Speaker. The Premier threatens a fiscal reckoning for Albertans and simultaneously asks taxpayers to pay the salaries for his party's staff. Apparently, the reckoning doesn't apply to him or his friends and definitely not to the insiders in his party. It was wrong for the Premier to lay off more than 20,000 educational workers while using taxpayer money to pay the salaries of his employees. Has the government no shame?

This government needs to focus on the things they promised during the election. They should properly fund education and keep

the promises they made to support students who have special needs and all Alberta students. Instead, they are prioritizing a political handout to their own party staff. Our students, all Albertans deserve better.

### Choice in Education

**Ms Issik:** Mr. Speaker, last week we tabled Bill 15, the Choice in Education Act, 2020. If passed, this bill will honour our commitment to Albertans to affirm that parents have primary responsibility for the education of their children. I am proud that our government has introduced this bill.

A key strength of our education system is school choice, and a fundamental aspect of that is offering faith-based education. For example, the Headway School Society of Alberta offers faith-based education for Sikh students, the Al-Mustafa Academy offers it for Muslim students, and the Calgary Jewish Academy in my own constituency offers it for Jewish students. Additionally, charter schools across the province offer specialized programming for their students. An example of the excellent work these schools do is the Boyle Street Education Centre, whose mission is to inspire and support educational success and social development of youth who have previously experienced interruptions in learning.

Based on these examples you can imagine why I was appalled to learn that Gil McGowan of the Alberta Federation of Labour, best friend and board member of the NDP, stated that Bill 15 "paves the way for nutbar religious charter schools & home-schooling." These comments were hateful. Nobody should be labelled a nutbar for choosing to educate their child in a charter or faith-based learning environment. The NDP affiliate's comments were an affront to the parents of approximately 80,000 students who attend a charter school, an independent school, or are home-schooled.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the parents of these students that we will not stand for this kind of rhetoric. We were elected with a clear mandate to defend parental choice. I'm calling on all members of this House to condemn this NDP board member's hateful remarks. I assure you that my constituents and my colleagues and I on this side of the House condemn this hate. The question is: will the NDP condemn one of their own?

### Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, small businesses across the province have been hurting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are forced to close their doors but have been offered next to nothing in supports from this UCP government. All they have been offered is deferrals that kick the can down the road and provide no real support to help these struggling businesses. Instead, this UCP government has relied on Justin Trudeau, their new friend and donor, to take the lead in supporting Alberta businesses. This includes the failed provincial-federal rent subsidy program this government negotiated with the feds. And to make a bad situation worse, the UCP pulled the rug out from under Calgary businesses less than 24 hours before they were supposed to reopen. This added to their financial burden as many restaurants had to get rid of thousands of dollars' worth of food. Meanwhile, the bills keep coming in for these businesses with no help from the UCP government.

While these businesses struggle, the Premier and the UCP are exploiting a loophole so they can take federal bailout money for their party while businesses can't get access to federal relief because of narrow eligibility criteria. Apparently, the Premier thinks that instead of asking his members to donate what they can, he should force hard-hit Canadian taxpayers to bail out his political party. The Premier warns Albertans about a fiscal reckoning, but

behind closed doors he is applying to use the public purse to protect UCP political staff. Apparently, the reckoning doesn't apply to him and his friends. Alberta businesses certainly deserve better than this.

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

### Intergenerational Day

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, June 1, is Intergenerational Day, an occasion to promote the rich and sustainable connections between generations. I believe it is incumbent upon us to do what we can to build greater awareness, understanding, and harmony between the generations.

This year, Mr. Speaker, Intergenerational Day will be different. In these challenging times of the pandemic we may not be able to reach out and connect with an older Albertan for coffee or lunch like we usually would. There are many great virtual ways for people of different ages to connect without putting loved ones at risk. Grandchildren can challenge grandparents to a dance-off; parents can share a story from their youth with their children; older adults can teach younger family members new skills, or vice versa.

Reach out to seniors in care facilities. Not all seniors are parents or grandparents, and some live far away from family. Connection made with a senior as simple as writing a nice card contributes to more understanding between generations. It is amazing what we can do together by leveraging technology. You can just pick up the phone for a conversation or video call.

Mr. Speaker, today also marks the beginning of Seniors' Week in Alberta, a time when we recognize and celebrate all that seniors have contributed to our families, to our communities, and to our province. Myself along with hundreds of thousands of Albertans greatly appreciate the sacrifice, courage, and never-give-up spirit they've always displayed. This spirit will help us to come out of this pandemic stronger than we were before.

Intergenerational Day reminds us that we need to sustain those connections between the generations. By sharing our experiences and learning from each other, we are making our communities and our province stronger.

Thank you.

### Renter Protection from Eviction

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP is failing renters in our province. This government was last in Canada to acknowledge that people should have a home during the COVID-19 crisis. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming into protecting renters from eviction for the month of April, and the Premier even told the people afraid of eviction that if they were being evicted, it was likely their fault. Absolutely shameful. The UCP's concerns were so transparently insincere that they didn't extend the ban for May and June even though the same global pandemic that was in April was still impacting renters. Concerned Albertans asked the minister of culture to extend the eviction ban for May, and she dismissed it, telling them that they had the ability to talk with their landlords.

1:50

This lack of concern about the safety of renters is even more apparent as Albertans are forced to watch as a member of the UCP caucus takes steps to evict one of his own renters. That's right, Mr. Speaker. During a pandemic the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is evicting a tenant, a tenant who has lost income, who has proposed a payment plan like this government told them to do, but who is now facing losing his home. At a time when the UCP is taking money from the taxpayers to bail out their own debt-ridden party

office, they're turning a blind eye to one of their colleagues trying to cast someone out of their home.

The UCP must condemn this. They need to show Albertans that they support them with more than just lip service and deferrals. They need to show that they see Albertans as people who need support and compassion and not just piggy banks so that the UCP, who spent over a million dollars in three months, Mr. Speaker, can subsidize the Premier's partisan birthday cards. It's June 1. Rent is due today for millions of Albertans. The UCP's disinterest in helping renters is putting people at risk and needs to stop. It's time for an eviction ban. It's time for the UCP to finally show that they care about renters.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Racism Prevention

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all look at what is happening in the United States, it's important that we do not see this as someone else's problem. Racism is a problem here and now: indigenous people facing systemic discrimination, mosques being vandalized and set on fire, racial slurs against Asian Albertans because of COVID. We must do more than just condemn racism; we must actively fight it. Yet this government has cut several grants for helping communities fight racism by at least half. To the Premier: will he reconsider that decision?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for raising the important question of our need to, as a society, continue to combat racism in all of its forms, all kinds of hatred and bigotry. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons why this government, for the first time in two and a half decades, created a designated minister for multiculturalism to lead those efforts. I was proud to do so as the federal multiculturalism minister to implement the federal antiracism strategy. We continue to provide funds in this area. More importantly, we are taking practical measures to ensure equality of opportunity for Albertans of all backgrounds.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are facing a pandemic, an oil crisis, and a sharp rise in unemployment. The Premier said himself that we face a "fiscal reckoning" that will mean hardship and getting by with less. Now, he and I, of course, disagree very much on that approach. But where we should agree is that while racism always exists, the evidence of it becomes much more disturbing in tough times, and we must therefore redouble our efforts to fight it. Will the Premier commit today to restoring the funding designed to fight racism?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, program funding continues to be available. This government has retained the recently created Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council, created a designated minister of multiculturalism, also created for the first time in decades a designated minister for immigration, who is leading the action plan for fairness for newcomers. Often there's a kind of soft bigotry in the barriers that are erected for people of diverse backgrounds to get their education and credentials recognized. I believe, having been the federal multiculturalism minister for a decade, that the most practical thing we can do is to ensure equality of opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we can also do is fight racism directly, and we need that money restored.

Now, almost exactly two years ago our government produced a report with a series of recommendations on how best to fight racism, and one thing identified was education. We know racism is a learned behaviour, and that means antiracism can be learned, too. That's why we made a commitment to ensure our curriculum attacked racism head-on. Since then, however, that element appears to have been watered down. Again, will the Premier commit today to reversing that decision and to ensuring our kids are being taught to fight racism throughout our province?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I really do not understand what decision the Leader of the Opposition is referring to. It is clear that the curriculum in Alberta, the school system, includes education to ensure respect for diversity with respect to the diversity of faith, of racial background, of ethnic origin, of sexual orientation, and we agree with the opposition that those efforts must continue.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fighting racism and respecting diversity are actually different things, and that's why we're asking for the former.

#### Personal Protective Equipment Availability

**Ms Notley:** Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, a month ago our caucus introduced a smart relaunch strategy which included the call to help small businesses needing PPE by taking over procurement and also offsetting the cost. Instead, last week businesses found out that they were going to be charged for PPE. Now, the Premier is happy receiving a taxpayer handout from Ottawa for his party, but when it comes to giving a hand to small business in Alberta, he's hanging them out to dry. Why is that?

**Mr. Kenney:** Now, Mr. Speaker, there is not a jurisdiction in the world I know of that is providing unlimited and free PPE to every business enterprise. It would be practically impossible to do so. However, we are the only place in Canada, one of the only places in the world that I know of, that has a massive program to distribute nonsurgical masks to the general public; 40 million masks will be distributed in the weeks to come to help. Small-business owners can obtain those as well, and we'll be sharing them with municipalities and indigenous communities to take a concrete measure to help keep people safe during the pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, after steep losses in revenue many businesses are struggling to get their doors open and gain customers back, and they seriously do not have time to drive from drive-through to drive-through to drive-through, picking up four masks at a time. That is ridiculous.

Now, part of the challenge these businesses have is making sure that their customers and staff members feel safe, and this comes at a significant cost for business. So instead of chasing taxpayer gifts for his party, why won't the Premier act on our proposal and show leadership in providing an affordable and adequate PPE supply for Alberta small businesses?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition that through much of the past 10 weeks the 85 per cent of Alberta businesses that continued to operate under enhanced hygiene

protocols obtained their own personal protective equipment, with some very minor exceptions; for first responders in the public sector and pharmacists, for example. But, broadly, the 85 per cent found a way to source the equipment at their expense, realizing that it's necessary to do. We're confident that the other 15 per cent of Alberta businesses will be able to do the same.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's not just your mom-and-pop shops.

The province was supporting medical clinics, but now instead of treating patients, doctors are spending their time negotiating the price of masks. Calgary & Area Medical Staff Society president, Dr. Scott Beach, said, quote, we are asked to carry this cost on an already unstable foundation of funding to our clinics and at great risk to our personal and our staff's health. End quote. To the Premier: why is it okay for taxpayers to pay the bills at UCP headquarters, but providing masks for doctors is apparently a bridge too far? Where are the Premier's priorities?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the federal wage subsidy program, to which the opposition refers, was created to avoid even hundreds of thousands or millions more layoffs on a temporary basis during the pandemic. Unlike the NDP, the UCP suspended fundraising for weeks while the NDP sought to monetize the pandemic by fundraising on it.

With respect to PPE, Mr. Speaker, we are the only province in Canada to be providing tens of millions of nonsurgical masks to Albertans, and we expect those businesses whose activities have been suspended to do the same thing as the 85 per cent who continued to operate, to continue to operate safely.

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

#### COVID-19 Statistics and Terminology

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of the 143 Albertans lost to COVID-19 the majority were seniors – parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts – yet in the course of arguing that the pandemic is less of a crisis than the economy, the Premier rose in this House and reduced these people to statistics. He said, "The average age of death from COVID in Alberta is 83, and I remind the House that the average life expectancy in the province is age 82." Why is the Premier telling seniors that if they live past a certain age, their health care should be considered less of a priority?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is typical vile conduct by the Leader of the Opposition, who's been dancing on people's graves over the past 10 weeks, seeking to politicize this terrible human tragedy. The speech I gave was very clear. She sat here, and she did not make that claim last Wednesday. She's only done it after her attack machine on Twitter decided to invent a new outrage of the day. What I said was that it's precisely because of those statistics that we must redouble our efforts and focus our future efforts on protecting the most vulnerable, who tend to be the oldest Albertans.

2:00

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, the reason I'm asking it today is because last week when our seniors critic asked the Health minister to explain these comments, he couldn't, and he didn't even respond, so we're back at it. The fact of the matter is that the Premier's statistical analysis was a cold display of



heartlessness. People were shocked by his words. Will the Premier rise in this House today and apologize to the seniors who built this province and earned the right to a health care system that values their lives and their quality of lives equally?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we're rightly told that we should base policy on evidence, on data, and on statistics. The evidence of COVID-19 tells us that there is a very close correlation between its danger and the age of people, which is why I articulated on Friday that our efforts must increasingly be to build a wall of defence around those who are most vulnerable, who tend to be the oldest Albertans, particularly those in nursing homes and seniors congregate care facilities and particularly those with other advanced medical conditions. I make absolutely no apology for focusing on defending our seniors from this pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Oh, Mr. Speaker. Okay. Well, you know, the Premier also keeps calling COVID-19 an influenza to downplay the severity of the virus despite knowing that it's scientifically inaccurate, and when he's called out on it, again, he calls people names and he accuses his critics of being part of the so-called, quote, anger machine on the left. End quote. Numerous well-respected epidemiologists are saying that the Premier is wrong and that he's trivializing the pandemic. Why is he attacking doctors again instead of just acknowledging that he is wrong? He needs to clarify this with the public.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable that the Leader of the Opposition has not taken the time to familiarize herself with the advice given to the government by the chief medical officer of health, upon whose advice on March 17 the Lieutenant Governor in Council declared under section 52 of the Public Health Act that COVID-19 is an influenza pandemic. So for legal purposes it has been the case since March 17. Obviously, scientifically, a coronavirus and an influenza have different characteristics, but they also have many similar characteristics. That is exactly what the Public Health Act speaks to through the invocation of a public health emergency on March 17. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a question.

### **Racism Prevention** (continued)

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I love Alberta. This is a great place that draws its strength from the diversity of the people who live here. Still, there is racism here. I have experienced it. We must call it racism, and we must work together to stop it. To the minister of culture and multiculturalism: what steps are you specifically taking today to stand against racism in our province? Will you undo cuts to antiracism grants and increase funding for this important work?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank very much, Mr. Speaker. There has been an incredible amount of work. I'd like to highlight again that the Premier had mentioned about having the very first multicultural ministry in the last 25 years, and it's been an absolute privilege for all of us to be able to work collaboratively across this province with all of the minority groups to be able to really have a deep understanding of what some of the needs are. Initially, when we were first elected, the Premier held along with the Minister of Labour and Immigration a very, very large meeting – I think it was

attended by about 970 people – to help us understand the needs of this province and how it is that we can align that with the minorities of this province.

**Mr. Deol:** As far as we know, the antiracism council that was established by our NDP government has only met once in the more than a year since the UCP took power. This is not okay. That group of individuals with varying perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences was to help develop a fulsome plan to root out racism in Alberta. To the Premier: has the group met since February; will you call an emergency meeting this week; and can members of our NDP caucus, including myself, attend the meeting?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an interesting question given that all of the members from the opposition have access to me or, in fact, my chief of staff – I believe, actually, they have her cellphone number – to ask any questions they want any time. Seriously, over the last little while very, very few participated in that opportunity to be able to talk to us directly. Of course, you can speak with us at any time. More importantly than that, if the NDP choose to continue to use a crisis to be able to forward their agenda, that's up to them. On this side we're going to work with minority organizations all the time across the province, with the antiracism council and along with the associations that we have the privilege of working with.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, we must also take steps to keep our communities safe. The UCP government promised a million-dollar program to help cover security improvements at mosques, synagogues, churches, and other community facilities that may be the target of hate-motivated crimes. I have not heard anything about this program and when it will be implemented since the election. To the Premier: can you confirm that the money for this program will flow this week?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the hon. member for the important question, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed. The government will proceed with the security infrastructure project, which will provide cost-share grants to particularly faith institutions that have been targeted by hate crimes or threats of vandalism. I was honoured to create an analogous program at the federal level, and I actually visited a mosque once that prevented a firebomb attack thanks to security upgrades funded by that program. I know that my colleague the Solicitor General will be moving forward with the creation of that program in the near future.

### **Choice in Education**

**Mr. Toor:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Education tabled Bill 15, the Choice in Education Act, 2020, which will affirm that parents have the primary right to choose the type of education their children receive. While this seems like a no-brainer decision, hours later Gil McGowan, president of NDP-affiliated Alberta Federation of Labour, stated that this bill "paves the way for nutbar religious charter schools & home-schooling." Can the minister please explain this government's stance on charter and independent schools?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP affiliate's comments are a clear example as to why the Choice in Education Act, 2020, is necessary. School choice in Alberta is a strength in

our system, and it is insulting that this NDP affiliate would claim that such faith-based education and home-schooling is “nutbar.” Charter schools, independent schools, and home education all play an important role in our education system, and unlike the NDP, our government will work tirelessly to defend them.

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is clear that the NDP affiliate does not support parental choice in education and given that his comments directly attack the parents of over 19,000 kids who are wait-listed to attend a charter school and given that his comments also attack parents who exercise their right to home-school their child, can the minister please explain to this House why our government is willing to stand up for parents as they choose their children’s education?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It’s clear where this NDP affiliate stands. He does not support parents who choose to send their children to a faith-based school or to educate them at home. Quite frankly, it’s disappointing. Our government was elected with a clear mandate to protect parental rights and introduce the Choice in Education Act, 2020. I know that our government stands with all parents. Will the NDP stand up and condemn this outrageous attack on our parents?

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

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Boyle Street Education Centre charter school works with at-risk students who previously experienced interruption in their formal learning and given that the Edmonton Islamic society is an independent Islamic school that offers faith-based education for Islamic students and given that the NDP have failed to denounce their affiliate’s comments towards parents who choose faith-based education for their children, can the minister please explain the importance of education choice in Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we heard an NDP member a moment ago ask about protection for religious communities that are targeted by bigotry while a member of the board of the NDP, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, that has a governing relationship with that party, called parents of faith, quote, nutbars for wanting to educate their children in a manner consistent with their faith. The NDP apparently believes that Jewish parents are nutbars, Muslim parents are nutbars, Sikh parents and Christian parents are nutbars simply for wanting to raise their children consistent with their faith. Shame on the NDP. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Shame on the Premier, Mr. Speaker. The Premier fired over 20,000 education workers who were supporting kids and parents during the pandemic. His minister said it was a difficult decision. What doesn’t seem to be a difficult decision was for this Premier to stick his hand in the pocket of Justin Trudeau, but actually it’s the pocket of every Canadian taxpayer. To the Premier: will you acknowledge that you fired families, you took their taxes, and you’re using it to pay your own party staff? Have you no shame, Premier?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier will have the opportunity to answer the question; however, it sounds very similar to a question about party business and not government policy. The hon. Premier can answer if he would like.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, classrooms were suspended in March. Nonessential employees were released as they normally are in the summer. That is the Education critic of the NDP. Her ally, her board member Gil McGowan has referred to the parents of Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian students as being nutbars for wanting to send their kids to faith-based schools. Will she stand in this place and denounce those hateful, bigoted remarks?

**Ms Hoffman:** This Premier is trying so hard to defame our party when nobody on our board, nobody in our caucus said any such thing. Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect – I’m answering the Premier’s question.

#### Speaker’s Ruling Preambles to Supplementary Questions

**The Speaker:** Well, unfortunately . . .

**Ms Hoffman:** I can ask another one.

**The Speaker:** Order. You have the opportunity to ask questions given the format that is available to you. That requires that you not use a preamble. It’s very clear that that was a preamble. If you can ask your question in a manner more traditional to those allotted to those asking questions, you’re welcome to do so.

#### Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Education Funding (continued)

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has publicly attacked parents and children receiving PUF support and that this government at the same time is asking for money from the federal government, from taxpayers in fact, and given, again, that the government believes that it’s a better use of public money to pay the salaries of their UCP staff than supporting kids with special needs, why won’t the Premier apologize, return the money, and fund these children properly?

**The Speaker:** Well done.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Education critic of the NDP just blatantly denied what her fellow New Democrat said on Twitter, “UCP paves the way for nutbar religious charter schools & home-schooling . . . They’re trying to create an army of brainwashed right-wing warriors.” Those are his words. He has a constitutional role in governing the NDP. Will she stand up and denounce her colleague for referring to the parents of kids going to faith-based schools as being nutbars seeking to brainwash their kids?

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the Premier is so focused on trying to distract from the reality that he has created in Alberta schools, given that school districts across Alberta are being forced to impose massive new fees on families to maintain basic services and given that the government’s party is diverting emergency pandemic relief funding to pay their own party’s salaries, Mr. Speaker – this minister has apologized to Alberta families before, saying it was a difficult decision. Will the Premier apologize for taking money from taxpayers and putting it in his party’s coffers instead of paying

for important educational staff in all school systems? Staff in religious schools, staff in public schools . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, nonprofits, including parties across the country, participated in the wage subsidy program to keep people employed. But that's the second time. I'm going to give her a third opportunity as the Education critic of the NDP to stand in her place. When her leader started talking about bigotry and racism, a colleague of hers talked about targeted hatred against religious communities, that is what a governing member of the NDP participated in last week when he said that parents of kids who go to faith-based schools are nutbars who want to brainwash their children. Is that or is it not the policy and the view of the New Democratic Party?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the call.

### Provincial Parks

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Summer is here, the weather is improving, and Albertans are looking to safely spend time with their families in parks and spaces that rightfully belong to all of us, but not if the Minister of Environment and Parks has his way. He is still charging ahead with his plan to sell and shut down hundreds of parks in Alberta. He promised to release information for Albertans to see the details of this plan, but it's been weeks, and we still haven't seen anything. To the member: when is that info coming, or has he started listening to Albertans, and will he reverse this terrible policy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. As we've been clear in this House, there is no plan to sell Alberta parks. The hon. member knows that but continues with his fearmongering across the province. That's disappointing, but let me be clear. The answer is: there's no plan to sell Alberta's parks.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that over 8,000 Albertans signed a petition calling for this attack on parks to be cancelled and given that another 5,000 Albertans wrote directly to the minister asking him to cancel this policy and given that I doubt the minister could find eight people outside of his own office who support his plans to devastate Alberta's parks system, how many Albertans need to tell this minister to keep his hands off their parks before he finally listens?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, parks are not for sale in this province. The NDP continue to make things up, just like they did recently with our new coal policy, about which the chief of the Piikani First Nation said:

As a Nation, the health of our ancestral lands and the wellbeing of our people are one and the same. We support policies that allow us to safeguard both [while making] decisions that will positively impact our future generations . . . We are confident that this [legislation] will uphold Canada's world class environmental protection regulations while ensuring that economic development can proceed in southern Alberta.

That's what the hon. member refers to as a coal policy that will cause strip mining across the province. First Nations disagree with them because they're making it up.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the question was about parks and given that polls suggest that the majority of Albertans oppose the minister's plan and given that people are still calling for

consultations before this minister makes irreversible changes to our parks system and given that the UCP can't run their own party without a Trudeau bailout, maybe the minister should stop this reckless policy before it causes irreversible harm. To the minister: last time; will you stop this horrendous fire sale of Alberta's parks?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No Alberta parks are for sale, and Albertans will not take that hon. member or his party's word when it comes to parks. Remember, Mr. Speaker, our backyard, the place where you grew up, in Nordegg: that hon. member was part of a government who just a year ago tried to shut our entire community out of their backyard. Albertans know who they can trust when it comes to Crown land, not the made-up talking points of the NDP. Let me be very clear. Alberta parks are not for sale.

### Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, mobile-home residents have seen a number of positive developments over the past couple of months in the tabling and passage of an amended Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act as well as being included in the government's rent protections. But I'm hearing from some of my constituents that due to the pandemic they need access to the residential tenancy dispute resolution service sooner rather than later. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will you work to grant access to the RTDRS for mobile-home residents and landlords before the fall?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for West Yellowhead for the question. I know he cares very deeply for residents of mobile-home communities, as is evident by the work that he did over the last year to help me in organizing meetings with his constituents in his constituency on this topic, and he contributed greatly to the amendments we brought to the act just a couple of weeks ago. I'm pleased to just say that in the follow-up to us passing that bill, effective today mobile-home residents will have access to the RTDRS for any disputes related to matters of evictions. This is another example of our government taking action to make life better for Albertans.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that the amendments to the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act were only just tabled and debated and given that this change in access is happening so soon after that amendment and legislation was passed and given that the pandemic shed light on issues that required the RTDRS and given that mobile-home residents in my constituency of West Yellowhead will be happy to hear about this, can the minister please update the House on how he was able to make this available so quickly?

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good question. As everyone in this House will remember, we tabled this bill back in February, and then shortly thereafter the COVID-19 pandemic began and became the focus of our government for many, many weeks. During that time frame, many weeks before we returned to this House to debate and pass that bill, it became clear to me that in light of the pandemic mobile-home residents would have a significantly higher probability of needing to access the RTDRS early to deal with any disputes over evictions. So that is why I directed my department and worked with them to accelerate the implementation of this, so that they could have access to this service.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, given that my constituents will be happy to hear that update and given that this action clearly demonstrates how our government is making life better for Albertans and also

demonstrates the sharp contrast between this government being willing to act for mobile-home residents versus the former NDP government, who were silent on this issue for their entire four-year term yet have the audacity to now pretend that they care for mobile-home tenants, can the minister please update my constituents on the next steps in ensuring they have full access to the RTDRS?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another good question from my colleague. Let me just start by saying that our government knows that mobile-home communities are unique compared to traditional tenancy arrangements. It would be a disservice for us to rush in and just make the RTDRS available without having properly prepared and trained and equipped our hearing officers at the RTDRS to understand and be respectful towards those unique circumstances. We are working hard with our department to prepare our staff and to train them so they can handle these cases correctly and properly and with respect, and we'll have that ready this fall. This is an example of us acting where the NDP failed to.

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

#### Rural Physicians

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Stettler, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Canmore, Cochrane, Okotoks, Peace River, Rimbey, Westlock, Three Hills, Bragg Creek, Drayton Valley, Cold Lake, Lacombe, Pincher Creek, Fort McMurray, Ponoka, and Claresholm: Alberta Rural Health Week started with doctors being forced to close their practices or resign from their hospitals in all of those communities, and it ended with all nine doctors resigning from the hospital in Athabasca. To the Member for Calgary-Acadia: how many more towns will you do this to while you hide behind last year's numbers?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, to withdraw or to change hospital privileges in this province requires a physician to file a formal application with Alberta Health Services with a 90-day notice period, which has not occurred in Athabasca. Now, if physicians choose to voluntarily withdraw from serving patients in their local hospital, our government will work with AHS to make sure that those services are provided. But I also note that year over year we now have actually a net increase in physicians in this province, I think an indication that the \$5.4 billion that we provide our physicians is showing the physicians in this province that we are one of the best jurisdictions to compensate our doctors.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that these Athabasca doctors wrote that "there is no guarantee the government has the replacement physicians they say they do, and Athabasca may then be left with no doctors with privileges to provide these services" and given that we know this government is considering 77 rural emergency departments for closure or consolidation or reorganization or whatever Orwellian phrase they want to use for it and meanwhile they're chasing doctors out of rural hospitals, is this just the first step for this government to close down emergency care in Athabasca and across rural Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the previous government, we announced on April 24 an action plan to address access to primary care in rural Alberta, and we were very proud to have that, I think, six-point action plan to be able to make sure that physicians have the tools they need to be compensated fairly. It was \$81 million for the 700 physicians that practise in rural Alberta so that they can have the resources that they need to be able to serve Albertans in our rural communities.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that his action plan has led to even more doctors choosing to resign and given that the Athabasca doctors indeed wrote that the Premier, this minister, and the UCP "persist in a well designed public smear campaign against doctors at precisely the moment we need to be working together" and given that this same UCP is exploiting a loophole to funnel emergency federal aid funding into their staff members' pockets, will that member apologize for his continued disgraceful smear campaign against rural doctors, doctors across the province, and commit to returning the tax money his party diverted away from the struggling Alberta businesses it was meant for?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you. You know, none of that is true, but I think at this point I'm surprised that I'm not surprised because that party all last week tried to accuse this government of delaying the rollout of the \$2 per hour wage top-up for our health care aides. I found out, actually, that there is a site in Alberta that was delayed, not by this government but by the AUPE. Now, look, I'm happy that the AUPE has seen the error of their ways and they've changed their minds and that money is now getting into the hands of the deserving workers who need that top-up. Mr. Speaker, how do Albertans take that caucus seriously?

#### COVID-19 and Care Facility Staffing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Last Wednesday we asked the government how many continuing care workers were staying at a single site. The Member for Calgary-Acadia said: "As far as we are aware, the number is 100 per cent as of today." Over the weekend we learned through the media that this is untrue and that at least eight facilities still have workers moving from site to site. Why did the member provide false information to the House, and why is he still putting Alberta seniors at risk during this pandemic?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we have about 400 sites in this province. During the COVID debate I was advised by my officials that it was 100 per cent. I found out that it's actually about 99 per cent. So it's almost 100 per cent, and on behalf of those officials I apologize for the error, that it's 99, not 100 per cent. There are some facilities that needed an exemption from Dr. Hinshaw. Outside of those exemptions, that were provided under the medical advice of the chief medical officer of health, the remainder of the facilities have been able to comply.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that one of these facilities is Century Park, where all the workers were laid off in October and rehired for \$8 less an hour – so much for a \$2 top-up – and given that the Member for Calgary-Acadia and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville refused to lift a finger to help the residents and workers

at Century Park in October, why won't the minister commit now to ensuring that Century Park has single-site staffing, more than five weeks after the rule was supposed to be in place?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, the decision to provide an exemption is because it's an order of the chief medical officer of health. The decision to provide an exemption is fully within her jurisdiction.

**Ms Hoffman:** Not your fault you gave bad information. Not your fault that you're not imposing.

**Mr. Shandro:** I'm very happy to also answer the questions of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that the exemption is provided by the chief medical officer of health, and I would encourage the NDP caucus to give deference to the CMOH's decisions, including when there's an exemption to one of her orders. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. [interjection] Order. [interjection] I'm sure that's the case for the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is the only one with the call.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that workers caring for seniors in Vegreville are still making \$6 less an hour than they were in September while UCP staffers get their wages paid by federal tax dollars, why does this government insist that taxpayers must support the bloated salaries of their partisan staffers but doesn't mind whether Albertans who care for seniors make a living wage?

**Mr. Shandro:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this is from a caucus who spent all last week trying to tell us that we were delaying a rollout of a \$2 per hour wage top-up for our health care aides. We found out that it was not government delaying it; it was their friends in the AUPE. I'm very happy that the AUPE have changed their minds, but perhaps our friends in the NDP caucus, you know, could try to help encourage Albertans to take them more seriously by getting their facts straight. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

### Provincial Fiscal Position

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The years of NDP mismanagement, economic stagnation, low oil prices, intentional alienation from Ottawa, and now unforeseen fiscal crises due to a predatory pricing war between oligarchies and OPEC dictatorships have left Albertans fearful for our economic future. Albertans from all walks of life have had to make sacrifices, and people are worried about how they're going to put food on their tables and a roof over their head. Our government was elected to get Alberta's finances in order. To the Minister of Finance: what is the current reality of our fiscal situation?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The fiscal reality in Alberta is that we're extremely challenged. As a result of the pandemic the global economy has contracted severely, and Alberta's economy has not been spared. We were hit with another crisis when the price of oil crashed to depths we have not seen in modern times. We're making decisions and investments that create a strong foundation for economic growth and a return to prosperity for the province.

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for his response. Given that my riding of Peace River and the minister's riding of Grande Prairie-Wapiti are both heavily reliant on oil and gas and given that Alberta relies heavily on revenues generated from oil and gas, mining, construction, finance, insurance, and business and commercial services and given that nearly every sector in Alberta has been drastically impacted by the crash in oil and gas, to the same minister: what has happened to Alberta's revenue as a result of this situation?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Alberta is experiencing a significant drop in revenue due to both the economic effects of the pandemic and the predatory attacks on democratic oil production by regimes like Saudi Arabia and Russia. We expect the province's revenues to be billions less than we projected in Budget 2020, and we're planning to release a fiscal update later this summer to provide Albertans with more information.

2:30

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

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Alberta's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was and continues to be one of the top ranked in the world and given that Albertans who are fiscally struggling right now are eager to get moving again and back to work and given that our government is working hard to get our oil and gas sector back on track, again to the minister: what responsible options do we have to return to a responsible fiscal situation?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. We're making strategic investments that bring job opportunities for unemployed Albertans and long-term value for the province. We've doubled the budget for capital maintenance and renewal projects this year. We've also made an important investment for our economy with the Keystone XL pipeline. Effectively, we're creating conditions for an economic recovery that will be essential to returning this province back to fiscal health.

### CHEW Project Funding

**Member Irwin:** It's pride month, and while we want to celebrate, there's much work to be done. We know that queer and trans youth face many barriers, including an increased risk of homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use, and suicide. Just two days after their successful grand opening in March, CHEW, an organization that supports queer and trans youth, learned that this government cut their funding. Now they're having to launch online fundraisers, and staff are even selling off their own personal belongings to keep their doors open. To the Minister of Children's Services: why did you choose to cut one hundred per cent of CHEW's provincial funding at a time when the need has never been greater?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with part of what the member opposite said, that we have a great need

right now to review a lot of the prevention and early intervention services that we as a government provided to those most vulnerable. What we had hadn't been revisited in years. There was a very competitive process requiring all of those service providers to hit very high standards and adhere to the well-being and resiliency framework that was brought in by the members opposite.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Let's talk about well-being and resiliency. On just one day last week, two staff intervened in 10 overdoses involving the youth they work with, and what's so heartbreaking is that five of these were fatal. Given that we're talking about some of the most vulnerable kids, who often have no family support or other services that they're comfortable accessing, and that for many of them CHEW is truly a lifeline, to the minister of status of women. You didn't stand up last year when you had a chance to support protections for queer and trans kids in schools. I'm asking you now to do the right thing. Will you meet with CHEW along with the Minister of Children's Services and promise to restore funding to their life-saving work?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, I do want to be clear that while we have a number of service providers that address the family resource network model, there is also very specific programming that is dedicated to LGBTQ-plus young people who would be in difficult situations, and those are provided in a number of ways. I do agree with the member opposite that CHEW provides very important services, but also we have to respect that the family resource network also has a different mandate particularly.

**Member Irwin:** This Premier has a decades-long track record voting against the rights of the queer and trans community, but it's not too late to apologize for past actions he's taken and to show that people can change. Supporting CHEW won't break his budget, but it will mean that life-saving supports are provided for kids who need them the most. Why is the Premier willing to divert emergency pandemic funding to pay the bloated salaries of his party staff while refusing to fund a grassroots organization that is actually saving lives in the queer and trans youth community?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to this member for this information. I think what would be really, really great is to have the organization actually contact us. We have a variety of abilities, or through Children's Services, yeah, we can work together on this. I think that a lot of the work that's been done between the Minister of Children's Services and myself is making sure that dollars are directed towards the COVID response, and I'm sure, as the minister has already said, we'd be very happy to take a look at this.

Thank you.

### Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

**Member Ceci:** In February a group of UCP supporters held a secret meeting with officials from the city of Calgary to kill the green line. Between this group they've donated over \$63,000 to the UCP and their legacy party since 2015, and they donated \$18,000 directly to the Premier's leadership races. This group also included Steve Allan, the head of the government's inquiry into funding of energy campaigns and, of course, a well-known supporter of the Justice minister. Can the Premier please explain why this UCP-aligned group was having backroom meetings to kill the green line?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know about any backroom meetings, but I could tell you what happened in public in this room, on television, in *Hansard*. Those members opposite were here. We passed legislation guaranteeing the funding for the green line. The hon. member can make all the wild accusations that he wants, but if the meeting actually happened, apparently it failed because our legislation says otherwise.

**Member Ceci:** Given that Calgarians are hurting from the double shock of the oil price collapse from the COVID-19 pandemic while the UCP exploits a loophole to take a bailout package from their friend and donor Justin Trudeau and given that this project will help build a modern diversified economy while creating 20,000 jobs along the way and given that the Premier has said that any infrastructure spending will help stimulate the economy and given that this project is shovel-ready, to the Premier: will you commit to supporting the project and releasing the funding now, not years down the road?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I just pointed out – and maybe the hon. member is not able to go off his prepared notes – the fact is that we actually passed legislation in here guaranteeing funding for the green line LRT, in public, in front of the hon. member's party. We've also worked with the federal government to try to get their money to the city when they need it. The hon. member should take yes for an answer.

**Member Ceci:** To the Minister of Transportation: given that this group has only intensified its campaign against the green line and given that the Premier's hand-picked commissioner, Steve Allan, has called this project, quote, the most expensive error in Calgary's history and given that the Premier has warned of a fiscal reckoning for Albertans but simultaneously applies to use the public purse to protect UCP political staff and given that the Premier has already pulled back funding for the project and that he's said that he's okay with pausing it, does the Premier think that this project should be built, or does he agree with his commissioner and wealthy friends and donors that Albertans should face a fiscal reckoning while the UCP takes handouts?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, since I answered the question already, that in legislation we've said that we're going to fund the green line, let's talk about our friends. Let's talk about the hon. member's friend Gil McGowan, whose AFL actually has control of or access to a couple of seats of the NDP – it's right there, Mr. Speaker – and he said that parents that want to educate their children in their faith are nutbars. He said that Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and any other faith of people that want a right to educate their children and pass on their faith to their children through their school are nutbars. Will that hon. member and their party ever apologize for this?

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

### Tourism Industry

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that COVID-19 has hit our tourism industry hard. Provincial parks like my constituency namesake Fish Creek and scenic destinations such as Banff, Kananaskis, Waterton, and others across our great province, normally bustling with tourists from around the world, are largely empty. Those areas whose economies rely largely on tourism, visitation, and spending are limping along, with businesses struggling for survival. To the Minister of Economic Development,

Trade and Tourism: what is your department's and this government's plan for relaunch of the tourism sector for COVID-19?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his advocacy for the tourism industry. Tourism was, in fact, amongst the first and hardest of industries hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. This summer and the remainder of 2020 will look very different than in previous years. That's why we're repositioning our 10-year tourism strategy to be implemented in three phases: responding to the crisis and providing immediate relief, recovering from the crisis following the pandemic once travel restrictions are lifted, and rebuilding the industry for long-term growth.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, given that the need for pandemic relief is critical for those in the tourism and hospitality sectors and given that programs announced by the federal government have failed to provide the necessary support and hope for what is sure to be a staged relaunch of this all-important industry, can the minister please inform Albertans what our government is doing to fill the gaps in support of tourism and hospitality operators across our great province during this difficult time?

2:40

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. I know from the numerous and ongoing round-tables I've had with the tourism industry that this industry needed relief due to the pandemic, and our government has taken action to do just that. My colleague the Minister of Finance and I have worked together to abate the tourism levy from March 1 to December 31 of this year. This support means that the tourism and hospitality operators will have access to as much as \$27 million of much-needed liquidity and cash in hand.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that COVID-19 has essentially shut down international and transborder travel and given that domestic visitors may be our singular hope even after stage 3 of our provincial relaunch and given that Destination Canada's pre-COVID goal was to attract international tourists from around the world, to the same minister: what is the impact or perhaps the shortcomings of the supports provided through Destination Canada on our tourism sector, and how will we protect and continue to grow this much-touted pillar of job creation and diversification in Alberta?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. We have seen supports provided to our provincial tourism industry flowing through other agencies, and Travel Alberta is working to incorporate that funding into a support package for our tourism industry. We're hoping to see an incorporation of funding from Destination Canada and Western Economic Diversification that can support our tourism industry and provide local support. Our tourism industry is a critical part of our investment and growth strategy. It's the fourth-largest sector in our province, and it employs more than 120,000 Albertans. We will

continue to support it, and in time we can't wait to welcome the world back to the strength and beauty that is Alberta.

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

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane has a statement to make.

## Federal Response to COVID-19

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world is in a precarious place as we reopen economies in the wake of COVID-19. Our federal government has been criticized for a delayed response to the pandemic, support of the WHO, and their defence of China. Liberals refer to a conspiracy and attempt to distract by pointing to the U.S. and mistakes they may have made.

But let's run down a few facts. This outbreak began last fall in Wuhan. Without warning, China began acquiring PPE and continued international travel while hosting conferences, knowing a serious health risk existed. Last December Dr. Li sent out a global warning about COVID, and the Chinese government arrested him. With the infection out of control, the doctor went back to work and tragically died on February 7.

While countries like Korea and Taiwan implemented strict travel restrictions and screening, Canada did not. They took their direction from the P.R.C.-influenced WHO, who stated that border closures, the use of masks, and contact tracing were not effective. In the face of clearly poor advice, the Liberals not only defend the WHO, but they increased funding to the organization. Australia, the EU, and the U.S. have all called for an inquiry into China's actions. Knowing the ramifications, China looks to recuse themselves from their moral and fiduciary responsibility around the pandemic. And where has Canada been? Well, silent, parroting WHO talking points while our allies seek answers.

Why is Canada an outlier? How do we support an oppressive regime and not our neighbour and largest trading partner? Mr. Speaker, an inquiry into COVID-19 is justifiable, and if fault determined, then compensation should be awarded. Why is that so difficult for Trudeau to acknowledge?

Thank you.

## Support for Persons with Disabilities

**Ms Renaud:** It's National AccessAbility Week in Canada, that time of year when we talk about the need to remove barriers and include people with disabilities. Poverty, isolation, lack of access to educational supports, unemployment, and abuse are barriers that block disabled Albertans from real inclusion. I asked this government's officials in Public Accounts if there were any metrics to measure the participation of disabled Albertans in apprenticeship programs, and the answer was no.

The UCP spends over \$11 million supporting disabled post-secondary students but couldn't find any related metrics on the completion or employment rates. Children with disabilities who need intensive early intervention to prepare them for inclusive education now have one less year of funding, and still this government says: all good. Students who need EAs lost their lifelines during the pandemic and now face shrinking supports when they return to school while the UCP reintroduce seclusion rooms.

Over 68,000 disabled Albertans had their AISH core benefits cut when the UCP eliminated their cost-of-living increase, but, hey, we got a \$30 million war room. Without consultation the UCP abruptly changed AISH payment dates, causing all kinds of hardships for people. Using an omnibus bill, the UCP rewrote AISH legislation to be able to change eligibility rules behind cabinet room doors instead of facing the scrutiny of this place.

Our new Premier's charity council, tasked with awarding millions of dollars, has 15 members. Only five are women, and none of the bios indicated any lived experience or even experience with the disability community. Happy talk about respecting disabled Albertans and inclusion means nothing. Only hard work, verifiable progress, a seat at the table, and investment tear down barriers. This UCP government is failing disabled Albertans. We will not in 2023.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Albertans' Resiliency

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a spirit, an ethos, which runs through Alberta, and while it is present in other provinces, I believe that it runs stronger and deeper here in Alberta, here where pioneers from every province and from many countries from around the world have chosen to live, here where there is an undercurrent of resiliency which fuels everything that we do. Resilient First Nation peoples hunted the bison across the plains and endured the bitter prairie winter without any modern conveniences. Early settlers carved out farms with nothing but their hands and daylight. They accomplished this with resiliency. No matter how hard a time our predecessors experienced, they endured it. World War I, World War II, the Great Depression: they endured through every challenge in their paths.

The same resiliency exists in each and every Albertan today. Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed this resiliency first-hand. I have witnessed Albertans withstand and endure circumstances that would crush other people. My good friend up north lost a son, a home, a mother, and a sister and then got flooded out. He keeps going. I witnessed my community go up in flames, entire neighbourhoods burned to the ground. We put the fires out, we cleaned up, and we continue to rebuild. We get hit by a flood, a 1-in-100-year flood, we clean that up, we dry that out, we rebuild, and we move back in. No matter what comes our way – fire, flood, recession, pandemic, or an oil war – we will always be resilient. No one can take that away from us.

We did it with support from our fellow Albertans and Canadians across the nation, donations made up of money, water, food, blankets, shelter, and, most importantly, the outpouring of public support that was demonstrated with volunteerism and charity. Resiliency is easier when you have that support. The government's bits and pieces program received more than 3,000 offers of support. That is the Alberta spirit. That is our ethos. To come together and go forward with that support helps us to be resilient and to be strong.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 18 Corrections (Alberta Parole Board) Amendment Act, 2020

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce first reading of Bill 18, Corrections (Alberta Parole Board) Amendment Act, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation would result in the creation of the Alberta parole board. A provincial parole board would be more in touch with current issues facing Albertans to better meet the needs of Alberta communities. Such a board would provide a fairer, faster, more responsive and responsible justice system that better protects Albertans, their loved ones, and their property from repeat offenders. I hope members on both sides of the House will support this legislation.

I ask that we move first reading of Bill 18, Corrections (Alberta Parole Board) Amendment Act, 2020.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were no points of order. However, I am prepared to rule on the point of privilege, the question that was raised by the Official Opposition House Leader on May 28. I will apologize in advance for the lengthy ruling.

### Privilege Contempt of the Assembly

**The Speaker:** I would like to start by reminding members that a genuine question of privilege is a serious matter, and therefore the raising of such a matter ought to be rare: *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, page 141.

2:50

The Official Opposition House Leader submitted to my office on the morning of May 28, at 11:28, a notice that she intended to raise a question of privilege that afternoon. Members will know that this is two minutes prior to the deadline for such notices under Standing Order 15(2). Normally whether a member has met the deadline for submitting their notice is dealt with as a preliminary matter in Speakers' rulings of this nature. However, in this circumstance I must elaborate on what transpired last Thursday in relation to this procedure.

As noted in my comments last Thursday afternoon, I was more than a little disappointed to learn that the Official Opposition had issued a media advisory at approximately 10:31 a.m. that same morning indicating that the NDP caucus intended to raise a question of privilege in the Assembly, nearly a full hour prior to informing my office. It is difficult to communicate my concern fully on this issue of notice being provided to the media prior to official notice being provided to the Speaker's office. I would start by emphasizing that it is a long-standing expectation for members who raise a matter of privilege to provide notice to the Speaker first before anyone else receives such notice.

In the matter before the Assembly there was ample opportunity for this to happen, yet it did not occur. Evidence of this was the press release that was sent a full hour before, at 10:31, on behalf of the member. However, what is abundantly clear is that notifying the media about such a serious matter as a question of privilege before notifying the Speaker offends the dignity and the respect that should be accorded to the Office of the Speaker and indeed this institution of parliament. What I will conclude is that this action shows blatant disrespect for the Office of the Speaker. I will submit to the Assembly that some members may not like the Speaker and that some members may not even respect the Speaker, but showing this level of disrespect to the Office of the Speaker is not acceptable. I will, however, proceed with this ruling as though notice had been given in an appropriate fashion.

Having provided my caution in respect of this preliminary matter, I will now turn to the substance of the matter in question. On the afternoon of May 28, 2020, the Official Opposition House Leader



presented arguments in support of her position that the government committed a contempt of the Assembly. The facts presented by the Official Opposition House Leader were not disputed by the Government House Leader, that the Official Opposition was informed that the government would no longer provide opposition members with briefings in advance of government bills being introduced. Consequently, a previously scheduled briefing on Bill 15, Choice in Education Act, 2020, for the opposition members on the morning of May 28, 2020, was cancelled. However, the Official Opposition House Leader also indicated that the media did receive a briefing on this bill prior to its introduction. The Official Opposition House Leader argued that the government obstructed members in conducting their parliamentary functions by providing information about Bill 15 to the media before its introduction and without offering members of the Official Opposition a similar opportunity.

It is on this basis that the Official Opposition House Leader argues that the government committed a contempt. The frequently cited definition of contempt, found at page 289 of *Ersine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 25th edition, is as follows:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or . . . obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of their duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even [if] there is no precedent of the offence.

Members may wish to review pages 80 to 83 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, to further their understanding of the difference between privilege and contempt. Contempts do not fall within a specific category of privilege but are an affront against the dignity of the Assembly. As it's noted on page 141 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, both claims – that a privilege has been infringed and that a contempt has been committed – are raised by means of a question of privilege.

This is not the first time that this issue of opposition members accessing media briefings and premature disclosure of bills has arisen in this Assembly. We have the benefit of several rulings of previous Speakers of this Assembly to which one may look for guidance. I must start from the general principle that there is no specific right to have the government brief members on the content of the bill, as was noted on December 2, 2014, by Speaker Zwozdesky at page 300 of *Hansard* for that day. In that ruling Speaker Zwozdesky did not find a prima facie case of privilege or contempt resulting from the government providing a briefing to the media but not providing a similar briefing at the same time to members of the opposition. However, Speaker Zwozdesky also went on to distinguish the facts of the case before him, in which the briefing was provided after the introduction of a bill, and the circumstances in which the briefing was provided when a bill was on notice on the Order Paper but had yet to be introduced in the Assembly.

In a ruling by Speaker Kowalski dated March 5, 2003, the former Speaker did find that a prima facie case of contempt had been established in a case where the information about the contents of a bill on notice but not yet introduced had been provided by the government at a briefing to which only media was invited. The facts of this case, however, included the leader of the third party being questioned by the media on the information related to the bill prior to its introduction. Speaker Kowalski relied on a ruling of then House of Commons Speaker Milliken on March 19, 2001, in which he states at page 1840 of House of Commons Debates that

the convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves may be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent role which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of [our] nation.

Relying on the Speaker Milliken ruling, Speaker Kowalski concluded that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is not bound by decisions of the House of Commons, but he was unable to hold that members of the House of Commons were accorded greater respect and dignity than members of this Assembly.

I know that Speakers of the House of Commons have addressed questions of privilege of this nature on numerous occasions, including as recently as March 10, 2020, when Speaker Rota on page 1892 of House of Commons Debates stated that the rule of confidentiality of bills prevents the revealing of specific measures contained in a bill at the time it's put on notice.

Furthermore, in this Assembly on November 8, 2016, Speaker Wanner at pages 1775-76 of *Hansard* applied a similar standard when he considered whether government statements and materials contained specific details of a bill on notice. However, in this case, Speaker Wanner did not find that a prima facie case of contempt was established and concluded that only broad statements of policy had in fact been communicated, which did not impede members of the Assembly in the discharge of their duties.

3:00

Turning back to the case at hand, while the Official Opposition House Leader stated in her argument, which can be found at page 888-889 of *Hansard* from May 28, 2020, that "it is clear that members of the media had the opportunity to assess the contents of the bill prior to . . . the Assembly," she did not, however, present any evidence that this had in fact occurred, nor did she provide examples of specific content of the bill that was distributed, if any, at any of the briefings. In fact, the Official Opposition House Leader did not provide any information about what she may have understood had taken place at the briefing on Bill 15, nor did she communicate to the Assembly what may have happened through documentation tabled for all to access.

In response the Government House Leader stated at page 891 of *Hansard*, "the government has never shared the final form of a bill with the media."

On the question of whether specific details of Bill 15 were disclosed during the media briefing, I'm only able to rule on the evidence presented before me, and having no such evidence in this respect, I am unable to find that the bill or any specific details were disclosed during the briefing.

Finally, I note that unlike the circumstances on which the March 5, 2003, ruling of Speaker Kowalski were based, the Official Opposition House Leader did not present any evidence indicating that she nor any member were placed in a similar position to the facts of the Speaker Kowalski ruling in 2003, being that they had received inquiries from the media or public about the bill prior to its introduction.

In a ruling dated March 22, 2011, Speaker Milliken of the House of Commons considered the case of early disclosure of information pertaining to government estimates. Speaker Milliken considered whether the specific evidence suggested that the member had been impeded in the performance of their function. Speaker Milliken subsequently determined that there was no such evidence before him, and while also considering the assurances that had been given by the minister that appropriate steps would be taken to prevent future disclosure of information, he did not find a prima facie case of contempt had been established.

In closing, while I acknowledge the Official Opposition's desire to access technical briefings from the government and recognize that these briefings may assist a member gaining better knowledge of the bill, based on the evidence before me and established precedent I do not find a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established in this case. If the government wants to offer media briefings to which opposition members are not invited, it is within their purview to do that. If the briefing occurs while the bill is on notice but prior to its introduction, specific details of the bill are not to be disclosed.

As Speaker Kowalski found in a ruling dated April 27, 2009, which can be found on page 824 of *Hansard* for that day, "allowing or not allowing a member to attend a media briefing does not constitute an impediment or obstruction to the member performing his or her parliamentary duties." In this respect I would emphasize that the Speaker exercises no control over who may or may not attend a briefing on a bill provided by the government.

I wish to offer one final thought specifically for the Government House Leader's consideration. I understand that at one time the long-standing practice of the government was to provide briefings on bills only after their introduction in the Assembly. As such, if this practice were adopted, the issues that arose in this case would obviously be avoided going forward. To ensure all members' rights are respected, technical briefings in which specific contents of a bill are discussed must occur after the bill's introduction in the Assembly. I will repeat for the Government House Leader's clarity: to ensure that all members' rights are respected, technical media briefings in which specific contents of a bill are discussed must occur after the bill's introduction in the Assembly.

This matter is now closed.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 201 Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly rise today to move second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I would like to thank many people, too many to mention them all, for their encouragement and support in bringing this bill to fruition. However, I will take time to mention my many friends and advisers of the Alberta Aviation Council for their enthusiasm and guidance. Of particular noteworthy mention are Brian Andrus, Scott Clements, Bram Tilroe, Lynn Wyton, Kevin Wong, and Brad Robson. Special thanks to them for their insights into this exciting sector. Thanks also to our caucus staff, James Johnson, Melissa Magliocca, and Emma Hopper, and, of course, the Assembly's legal counsel, with special appreciation to the Assembly's Vani Govindarajan and Teri Cherkewich for their patience and guidance in focusing the bill's intent while still allowing significant latitude in its interpretation.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

My decision to support this private member's bill was inspired by my own experience and learnings after two decades in commercial aviation with Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways, where I humbly developed a depth of knowledge in international airline sales, marketing, economics, and route development. This

role allowed me to work closely with sector peers, the private industry, economic developers, tourism promoters, and key ethnic communities in ensuring sustainable air services while exploiting related economic development and market opportunities.

Madam Speaker, Bill 201 establishes Alberta's first-ever strategic aviation advisory council, which will allow for appointment by the Lieutenant Governor of a chair and up to 14 other selected sector representatives and experts from air services development, including WestJet and other key regional, national, and international players; airport operations from our designated international airports through to representation for general aviation aerodromes; pilot training from a world-renowned commercial program at Mount Royal University to over 20 private flight schools which are now operating across the province; aircraft maintenance, avionics, and ground services training from our friends at SAIT and in the private sector in such exotic locales as Red Deer; and, of course, emerging aerospace RPAS, UAS, UAV, or for acronym-challenged listeners remote-piloted aircraft systems, unmanned aircraft systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles, or, in plain language, drones, along with related and emerging technology-focused initiatives.

The broader objectives of this bill, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, will be to ensure a strategic industry focus is brought forward to relevant ministries to ensure development of a strong, diverse, and sustainable sector that builds upon Alberta's rich aviation history and pioneering spirit. Our pre-eminence as a key global player goes back to the British Commonwealth air training plan from 1939 to 1945, where cities and towns like Lethbridge, High River, Edmonton, De Winton, Bowden, Pearce, Fort Macleod, Claresholm, Vulcan, Medicine Hat, Penhold, and Calgary played a key role. During those years over 130,000 aviators were trained in our great province, quite simply contributing pivotal skills that led to the eventual defeat of the Nazis after much sacrifice by these young, courageous, Alberta-trained aviators. Further, Alberta, most notably through Edmonton's now retired Blatchford field, has a long history as Canada's aviation Gateway to the North dating back to 1927.

We must also consider the importance of general aviation centres with respect to medevac services, fire and rescue operations, agricultural- and forestry-related aviation operations, and the broader context of ensuring reliable and sustainable access to remote communities across the province and around the region. Only through the establishment of a dedicated council of sector experts will we be able to undertake strategic research, engage in thoughtful and insightful planning, and direct focused recommendations around essential services and global opportunities in the sector.

Madam Speaker, as we succeed in the endeavour, we will attract investment, create jobs, and diversify our economy as we ensure Alberta will be able to leverage this rich history and high-flying entrepreneurial spirit into a critical pillar of the Alberta advantage in the near and distant future.

Madam Speaker, fellow members, broadly the bill will establish an advisory council made up of sector leaders and category experts representing the key areas of opportunity in aviation, air services, and related aerospace industries in the province of Alberta, reflective of but not limited to the subsectors noted in the bill, with a keen focus on our existing knowledge, expertise, and capacity, competitive advantages, and, of course, entrepreneurial spirit.

3:10

Through the council's annual recommendations the objective will be to complement the government's key role in connecting short-term sector opportunities to long-term strategic advantage for the province in support of ministry objectives, including economic

development, diversification, and the facilitation and leveraging of tourism growth, influencing federal transportation policy where required and further establishing ourselves as focused, insightful, and competent leaders in an emerging growth-oriented field within a global economy.

Further, I reach out to all of you as we discover opportunities within this sector through your input, interest, and the identification of all relevant facilities, operators, and organizations across our great province from all constituencies and MLAs to ensure we capture the broadest possible representation in support of reaching new heights within this burgeoning sector. With only 15 seats this does not mean that everyone gets a seat at the table but that we ensure all noted subsectors are represented with submissions from and engagement of a broad range of diverse stakeholders accommodated through the council structure, purpose, and duties.

Madam Speaker, I will not share with you today the full breadth envisioned within the sector for council stakeholders as outlined with substantial latitude for emerging technology, but I welcome outreach from all members of this House to ensure clarity and full appreciation of potential representation on the council, particularly as it may involve local individuals or organizations that they are familiar with.

The council will embrace stakeholders of interest and significance to not just Alberta Transportation and Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, but just as importantly I am certain that opportunities, critical focus, and insightful recommendations would be directed to other ministries as appropriate, including but not limited to Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Parks, Advanced Education, Health, Municipal Affairs, and of course the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

Madam Speaker, fellow members, the statistical analysis of this already significant sector is key to a bright future, but perhaps a few highlights are worthy of sharing. In 2018 Alberta exported goods valued at \$1.9 billion via air cargo. In 2019 Alberta's aerospace and defence industries included 500 companies directly employing 16,000 Albertans and directly contributing \$3.25 billion in provincial annual GDP. Our major airports carried over 25 million passengers in 2019. More than 139 destinations are served from our major airports. The tourism sector represents 70,000 full-time equivalent jobs and contributes over \$8 billion to provincial GDP, and of course our local darling WestJet's yearly economic output is more than \$5 billion and supports more than 32,000 direct and indirect jobs in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I hold right here in my hand – it's a large pile – letters of support received from across this sector and around the province for Bill 201, which I will proudly table tomorrow. I will gladly share them prior to tabling with all the respective MLAs for the constituency of origin.

Madam Speaker, it is not only self-evident to all members of this House that the airline sector and our vital air services has suffered a devastating blow from COVID-19. Although this bill was conceived and offered long before the pandemic emerged, it is clear that to get and keep our great province on track, the attraction and retention of air services, the initial and much narrower impetus to this bill we now have before us, is in fact essential.

In closing, I want you to think about Bill 201, an act to establish Alberta's first-ever strategic aviation advisory council, ladies and gentlemen, fellow members, as an aspirational and inspirational approach to building upon Alberta's rich aviation history as sector pioneers, entrepreneurs, a source of pilots and aviators, and as a gateway to remote regions of our province and Canada's north, an opportunity to consistently support key elements of Alberta's blueprint for jobs and 10-year tourism objectives, a way to utilize our strategic natural advantages of wide-open spaces, diverse

terrain, and challenging weather conditions for testing and training, an insightful technology-driven way to engage our strong entrepreneurial and pioneering spirit and to leverage a highly educated population, strong research talents and innovation, and technology capabilities as they broaden our horizons from the obvious ties to oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture.

As we inspire our best and brightest through strong post-secondary engagement and private-sector investment in our future and as a reminder of what has been and what can be on a global scale, let's recall our provincial history of leadership dating back to Wardair, Pacific Western, Canadian, and now our current provincial flagship bearer and Canada's second-largest international airline, WestJet, whose provincial pride and hub is key to the bright future all of us envision from this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, fellow members, please know that your support and input are appreciated while I welcome and would be grateful for your input and support as we speak to the bill and as I encourage you to reflect on its relevance to your constituency to ensure well-informed passage. And I'll... [Mr. Gotfried's speaking time expired]

Thank you on that note.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. member for – I'm so sorry, guys.

**Mr. Reid:** Livingstone-Macleod.

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

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would first like to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this very important private member's bill. His passion for this file is evident, and it's an honour to join him in speaking to this today. Aviation is an industry that often gets overlooked as merely another form of transit, a way for executives of other industries to get around. This couldn't be further from the truth, and I am glad to see my colleague bringing this to light.

Alberta's history with aviation is long and incredibly interesting, from pilots sacrificing their lives in World War I to the stunt fliers that arrived in Alberta in 1916. The very same values that drove Albertans to the western frontier just a couple of generations earlier now are driving them into this new frontier of flight. Alberta prizes its aviation history, with museums dedicated to aviation in Calgary and Edmonton and in my own riding of Livingstone-Macleod in the town of Nanton. In Nanton tourists can visit the Bomber Command Museum of Canada, exhibiting some of the planes that contributed to Canada's effort in the Second World War.

Alberta's aviation industry has changed drastically since that time, of course. Calgary's first airport was built in the late 1930s, following the construction of the Edmonton municipal airport in 1927. Smaller airports dot the province, from Lethbridge and Medicine Hat in the south to Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray in the north. Throughout time nearly everything about the aviation industry has changed, whether it be the planes themselves or the reason that they fly. Our airports have gotten bigger, the screening before getting on the plane has gotten tighter and more complicated, and the ways that we check in have changed as quickly as technology has afforded it.

Today our aviation industry faces challenges no one could have imagined or predicted as the coronavirus has led to a massive collapse in sales for airlines. This is why I believe the legislation brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is so important. The government should always be paying attention to the advice of experts and when policies can or should be changed for the betterment of the province. The creation of the strategic

aviation advisory council puts us in a place to be more nimble, to react to the changes in the global environment facing the aviation industry. Whether through changing policies here or effectively lobbying the federal government for changes, this legislation would put our province in a position to promote and support our aviation industry.

Over the last couple of years Alberta has already lost a number of major airlines that used to come to Alberta to deliver goods, and there are signs that more may be headed that way in the future. Alberta, already struggling from the oil price crash and the previous government's policies that weakened our energy sector, cannot afford to see another industry leave the province.

This council, should it be approved, will have a clear and ambitious role in creating recommendations for the government in order to support our aviation sector. It will be made up of members of a number of unique subsectors, meaning that every sector would be able to present their challenges and their recommendations. While the goal of the council would not be the creation of policy, this council will provide recommendations to the minister on how to improve aerospace-related services, infrastructure, and training.

When I ran for office, I ran on the promise of accountability. I understand very well that I am not the go-to expert on everything that I need to deal with, and as a candidate I promised my constituents that I would listen to them. As a party we ran on the premise of listening to Albertans. I believe that this is us following through on that promise and listening to key stakeholders in the aviation industry. They are the experts, and we can learn from them.

We also ran on a promise to create jobs. This industry is currently facing a large shortage of both pilots and aircraft mechanics. These are great, stable jobs, and had the advisory council existed a few years ago, this would be something we could already have been capitalizing on. I hope to see our government doing more to promote these jobs as being options for Alberta's graduating high school students.

I want to once again thank my colleague for bringing this bill forward. I will of course be supporting it, and I hope to see support for it throughout this Chamber.

Thank you.

3:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me. I would begin by saying that we support the airline industry. I also happen to represent the constituency that has the Calgary airport in it. Back in 2017, when there was the redistribution of boundaries, that constituency almost got named as Calgary-Airport. That didn't happen, but that was the initial proposal. If that would have happened, you would be calling me the member for the airport or something like that.

Anyway, I can talk a little bit about the Calgary airport, not only because it's in my riding, but it's an important business and economic hub, not only for Calgary but for the entire province and western Canada. I think that prior to COVID-19 almost 17.9 million passengers went through that airport, and in the 2018-19 estimates somewhere around 238,000 planned movement through this airport. It's also Alberta's busiest and Canada's fourth-largest airport, having an economic impact of \$8 billion.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek suggested that somehow this advisory council will help us make things better. I will certainly have some questions, but first I will put, I guess, my questions in context and share my understanding about how the airport works. It's my understanding – and I have looked into it as well – that under

the constitutional division of power under our Constitution aeronautics is something that's reserved for the federal government, and under the federal Aeronautics Act they regulate many of the airports, not every airport but many airports, especially those which are international, which connect different provinces and international communities. The Calgary airport is one of them. There is certainly some room for the province to do things that may relate to airports but nothing that directly relates to the federal government's jurisdiction to regulate aeronautics.

Then, secondly – again I speak specifically to the Calgary airport – it's the city of Calgary who has that authority to create the Calgary Airport Authority, that's responsible for the management, operations, and development of the airport. I guess that under that authority they have established that nonprofit, the Calgary Airport Authority, which can have no fewer than nine members and no more than 17 members. In establishing that authority, the city also went into the details about the composition of the Calgary Airport Authority board, and it says there in that regulation or in that order which establishes the Calgary Airport Authority that there can be "11 Directors, Representing the Long Range Planning Committee of the [Calgary] Chamber of Commerce."

So out of those 17, the Calgary Chamber of commerce is responsible for 11 directors. The Calgary Chamber of commerce is a well-known, well-reputed organization that draws from a range of business expertise, and they are the ones who are appointing 11 directors on this airport authority, specifically the Calgary Airport Authority. Then there are three directors that are appointed by the city of Calgary. Again, Calgary is a very vibrant, dynamic city, and there is an almost 1 million-plus population to choose from. Then there's one director that comes from the county of Rocky View, and the federal government, as owner through Transport Canada, can appoint two directors to that board.

With those, I think, 17 on the board, there is the ability for, in this case, the Calgary Airport Authority to draw from a wide range of expertise and bring people together to plan for its operations, to plan for its management, and to plan for its expansion. I would be interested to know how the council suggested by the MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek will interact with these existing authorities and what's different that they are planning on bringing to the table that these board members or these organizations were unable to bring forward.

There is a similar composition for other airports. The Edmonton airport, which is the second biggest in Alberta as well, also draws from different organizations and puts together a very experienced board for the operation, management, and expansion of the airport.

Generally speaking, I can say that these airport authorities and their governing boards are comprised of people from a wide range of backgrounds, diverse backgrounds, and they bring with them their diverse expertise. So I would be generally interested in knowing where the gaps were and if there were any conversations with these airport authorities in relation to this council.

Also, as I said, there is federal power to regulate aeronautics, and we are talking about a council that will be charged with "strategic planning, prioritization, securement and retention of intra-provincial, regional, national and international air services in support of economic growth, tourism development and sectoral diversification." A lot of words there, from "strategic planning" to "prioritization," from "securement" to "retention of intra-provincial, regional, national and international air services," so it is the broadest possible mandate, I think, in terms of the drafting of it.

But, again, I think the question I have is: what authority will this council have given that all these matters that are discussed in section 3(a) somewhat fall within the jurisdiction of the federal

government and are managed by Transport Canada? How will that council work with . . .

3:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the Wright brothers first developed and brought to life the idea of flight, I'm not sure they would have envisioned that commercial and personal flight would become as important as it is today. I'm sure all of us love the convenience of ordering a package on Amazon and having the Prime shipping option bring our packages to our doors in less than a week. Even more of us are able to maintain relationships with those across our country and visit places around the world because of the success of the aviation industry. This industry has become an unsung staple of modern-day life, an area wherein we must support development and encourage robust growth. There are no signs that the aviation industry will slow its growth in delivering goods and services to our families, our businesses, or our communities.

Madam Speaker, that is why I'm thankful for the opportunity to stand in this House today and support my colleague's private member's bill, Bill 201. In a country like ours we rely on a strong and bolstered aviation network more than we realize. Albertans have an especially unique and important history with the aviation industry. WestJet Airlines is a shining example of the unique kind of ingenuity and can-do spirit present in many western Canadian entrepreneurs. Formed in 1996, WestJet has grown to be the second-largest airline service in Canada and has shattered industry norms and expectations for most of its nearly 25-year history of operations. In fact, my brother-in-law works as a pilot for WestJet industries, and he met his wife working together as they've flown around the world, enjoying that entrepreneurial spirit.

The aviation industry has a huge potential to provide meaningful opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship throughout. The core objective of Bill 201, the establishment of a strategic aviation advisory council, SAAC, is a vital step in continuing to support and develop this industry. Madam Speaker, the aviation industry lives in a complex space with many factors. We need to find harmony between federal and provincial aviation regulations while supporting sustained growth in aviation as an emerging economy of its own. The establishment of a strategic aviation advisory council will allow for a strategic focus to be brought forward to relevant ministries to ensure that a strong, diverse, and sustainable sector is built throughout the aviation industry in Alberta. This advisory council will consider the anticipated needs of not only commercial and passenger aviation, but it will also consider the needs of general aviation centres such as medevac services, fire and air rescue operations, agriculture- and forestry-related operations, and the broader necessity of providing aviation services to remote and often overlooked rural communities throughout our province.

Strategic development of aviation assets within our province is especially pertinent to Lethbridge. As Lethbridge continues to grow as a hub of economic opportunity, especially in the agricultural and agrifood sectors, we must consider how we are going to get Lethbridge-produced products to market. Further to this, while some centres, like the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, are supported by an international airport to stimulate travel and aviation activities throughout their community, Lethbridge has seen a stunning lack of development in its aviation sector. The Lethbridge Airport has been patched together over the past few decades and has had to make do with ongoing temporary solutions instead of permanent solutions that consider the needs of Lethbridge's future. To put it simply, as Lethbridge's economy continues to grow,

develop, and respond to incoming trends and market opportunities, we need to develop our airport.

My community is still serviced by a small airport that features the original flooring tiles, installed in 1979. Madam Speaker, I'm not bringing this up because I'm ashamed of Lethbridge Airport; quite the contrary, actually. I see so much potential in my community and those who choose to continue to take risks and innovate throughout our various sectors. Unfortunately, as quickly as Lethbridge has grown and expanded and responded, our aviation infrastructure just hasn't been able to keep up. As other aerodromes and airports across the province have seen increased support, expansion, and investment over the past few decades, Lethbridge hasn't been considered to the same extent. I believe that Lethbridge's airport and those who have dedicated themselves to the aviation industry in my community deserve a little more than vintage floor tiles and make-do solutions.

I also believe that the establishment of the strategic aviation advisory council could have solved many of these issues years ago. Increasing cohesion and communication across this province can only lead to positive opportunities for teamwork and the consideration of one another's unique situations. For far too long a body of this nature has been needed but never proposed. Lethbridge and the vibrant people who make it home should be considered in the broad picture of Alberta's aviation industry. Further to this, the Lethbridge Airport should be included as an opportunity to innovate and get engaged in a forward-focused and youthful area of economic development.

As we consider the impact of what such an advisory council could mean, we should also consider how the aircraft and aerodrome maintenance industries offer many meaningful opportunities to establish a career. However, despite the identified need for these jobs and for skilled workers to develop careers in these areas, Canada is still facing a significant shortage of both pilots and aircraft workers as a whole. We have generations of young Albertans seeking good jobs, Madam Speaker, and some mid-career Albertans who are seeking new opportunities and new challenges. The aviation industry in this province should be seen as a beacon of opportunity for innovation and education and, most importantly, for delivering on the ask of economic diversification that many have raised over the years.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to speak to this vital bill, Madam Speaker, and support the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in his presentation. A stronger and reinvigorated approach to ensuring the longevity of aviation in our province can only lead to a stronger economy for all. As we move into 2020 and beyond, we must consider aviation as an integral part of our infrastructure. As the introduction of commercial and passenger aircraft has changed our world in significant ways, we can only expect that this trend of innovation and integration will continue for the years to come.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein rising.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess through you I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this very important bill, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, so we can debate it here in the House today. First of all, I want to express my support for this bill and its passage. A little known fact about me: I actually wanted to be a pilot when I was a kid and was aiming to be so until I found out that a half-blind kid with no depth perception didn't actually line up very well to be a very good pilot. At least, it wouldn't have instilled a lot of confidence in my passengers. So I had to give up on that dream, but

it didn't change my appreciation for aviation and flight, especially the appreciation for the great history of flight and the importance that aviation has for Alberta and for Albertans.

I think it's always been a key part of Albertan lives and an integral part of our economy. From the first flight that happened in 1918, when Katherine Stinson flew her Curtiss Stinson special between Edmonton and Calgary, carrying mail between those two cities, to the fighter pilots of the Second World War, who trained for combat in our beautiful prairie skies, to the crop-dusters and the bush pilots, the commercial airlines, and freight, Alberta had all the aspects of an aviation industry.

The wheels of our economy do not just travel on our roads. The runways are just as important to the prosperity of Albertans. I've heard stories from a lot of my colleagues, both here today and before, of the many ways that their constituents are involved in aviation or are enriched by the success of aviation here in Alberta. Small communities that are inaccessible by car or train, especially those of our First Nation partners, lean heavily on that thin strip of tarmac that allows for planes to be able to land and take off. With aviation in Alberta being so interconnected with our day-to-day lives, it is key that our government has the best advice to make the best decisions on subjects that will affect the lives and livelihoods of so many Albertans.

The strategic aviation advisory council is just that. It's a tool needed to help connect and hear from people who are on the front lines of this industry. As the proposed members would be drawn from every corner of aviation in Alberta, from trainers to pilots, air navigation authorities, tourism, maintenance programs, search and rescue experts, consumers, and business owners, the depth and breadth of knowledge that will be brought to the table will be substantial, and that's exactly what is needed for Alberta's aviation sector to not only face the challenges and issues within the field today but to surpass them and grow, then, into a greater hub of our economy than it already is. The experts populating this council will provide top-notch advice to our ministers and to our government departments, allowing for the industry to get what it needs to succeed.

As I have said in the past in earlier speeches, whether it's working alongside charities, not-for-profits, civil societies, or with corporate actors within our economy, our government is for responsible, common-sense approaches and solutions for Alberta's fiscal realities, solutions that are made in Alberta. We are not here to impose from the top what industry needs and what it wants. Instead, we want to ride alongside, listening to the advice while still standing accountable to the people of Alberta for how we craft policy and spend tax dollars on their behalf.

**3:40**

Freed from exhausting, micromanaging, top-down approaches that exemplified the previous government, the aviation sector, especially when it has a seat and a voice at the table with councils, like what my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek has put forward here, will be better suited to weather the current storm of COVID and be in a better position to deal with the post-COVID reality once things begin to settle.

Once again, I want to express my support for this bill and my great thanks to my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for putting it forward, and I encourage everybody in this House to support it.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, a private member's bill that, of

course, I did have the opportunity to get a little bit of a peek at earlier through the private members' bills committee. You know, I think some of my comments as we walk through this won't be completely unfamiliar to the member.

I do believe that Bill 201 encompasses, I guess, shall we say, a passion – I don't know if that is the best word to use – from the member through experience that he has gained over I believe it was the last 20 years. He's nodding at me, so we'll go with that number, Madam Speaker: 20 years within the industry serving it in various different capacities, so he managed to get a very, very broad perspective of that industry. Bill 201 will create an advisory council of between seven and 15 members from private industry, tourism, pilot training, aircraft maintenance, aerospace engineering, search and rescue. There are many, many others. Needless to say, the list is robust, as it should be.

You know, I couldn't help but key in on one of the comments from the Member for Calgary-Klein, talking about potentially being a pilot earlier on in life. As a kid I certainly enjoyed building model aircraft of all sorts – military, private, everything – painting them up, tying them up on my ceiling and everything like that. Maybe it's partly because my parents were both in the air force in their younger days, so for a short while there I even thought that maybe becoming a pilot might be kind of cool. Needless to say, events took me in different directions.

I think that as we look forward through here, we know that this council will be responsible for essentially researching aviation issues – and that's probably a very, very broad, very brief way of describing some of the duties that will be assigned to them – consulting with stakeholders, something that I want to touch on shortly here, and, of course, preparing a report to the minister on an annual basis.

As a member of the private members' bills committee I can't imagine having not had the opportunity to speak with individuals from the actual industry that were invited. That was able to inform us very, very well about why this bill needed to proceed back to the House for further discussion. You know, sometimes it can just be easy to look at a bill, maybe the title, "Well, that sounds kind of cool," and send it back. But because we had that opportunity to speak with those stakeholders, we were able as members to make a very, very informed decision moving forward, so I was very grateful for the opportunity to be able to speak to those stakeholders. It's unfortunate that we've not necessarily always had that opportunity.

One of the things that, I guess, is in my role is the red tape critic, and I mention that partly in connection with being a member of the private members' bills committee. I know one of the questions I asked about this council being formed – when it comes to private members' business, it's so important because an MLA can go their entire career never getting a chance to have a bill introduced in the House, let alone even passed sometimes. With a passion that has been built over the last 20 years to come to fruition in this bill, I can't help but be somewhat concerned, Madam Speaker, that this may be an opportunity to hijack this member's bill and use it as a way for partisan appointments to that council.

The member came up with a very, very robust list of stakeholders that should be part of the membership with that, but unfortunately we've seen from this government – and I'm pointing this out because there has to be the distinction between private members and the government. Using this to appoint, potentially, members that maybe don't have that expertise in the industry, like, for instance, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek does and was able to identify some very, very good stakeholders: I am concerned about that aspect.

My hope is that that's not the case, that you will get members to come onto this council to be able to advise how best to move forward because you did talk about diversification, a very, very important word in Alberta right now. If I might be so bold, Madam Speaker, I think this bill provides a chance at that diversification, more than we've seen the government offer diversification for Albertans over the last year. Again the member has to be commended for bringing that forward and providing an opportunity to grow an industry that, you know, has probably been overlooked for, well, 20 years at the very least, of which the member has spent time in there.

The other part that I want to key on. As I'd mentioned earlier, the consulting with stakeholders: you know, I don't think it's simply enough that the council just comes up with ideas; they need to go out and consult with all the various different stakeholders because, like you said, not everybody is going to get a seat at the table, as much as we would love to be able to do that. But it will provide an opportunity for them to speak with those industries that maybe didn't have a seat at the table, get their perspectives, and really provide an informed result, whether it be through one report or multiple reports, the annual report, whatever ends up taking place there.

Again, my hope is that this won't be an opportunity to promote partisan appointments to this council and that we get a chance to really create something that could benefit Albertans in terms of diversification rather than looking very, very specifically at maybe some of the things that we've always done over the past 20, 30 years. I think Albertans have a lot more to offer, and I know that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek even mentioned WestJet being a homegrown Alberta company. That there is an example of something that can grow into something very, very big.

I think that as the discussion moves forward, there are certainly some questions that will come up along the way. When I mentioned being the critic for red tape reduction – I don't know if the member did get a chance to speak with the associate minister on there. He's been very, very clear. His mandate is to eliminate red tape. One in, one out, one-third: we all know the talking points at this point. So I can't help but wonder: has the associate minister reduced enough red tape that will allow for this council to be created, you know, or are we going to create this and rush to eliminate some others because we want to keep up with that one-for-one? There's where we start to kind of mix in the whole government priorities versus a bill with a private member.

The other thing I would probably ask – and we'll probably hear more about this as the discussion goes around – will the council be able to speak independently from the government? The whole point is that it has to be for members of the industry independently advising how best Alberta can move forward to create that diversification, those opportunities, like WestJet did, for instance, to become one of the leading airlines, you know, within North America.

3:50

You know, I can't help but be cautious about those aspects just simply because of the things that I have seen from the government over the course of the last year: appointments or how they seem to be maybe meddling a little bit, maybe not. So my hope is that this council will get the opportunity to provide us some really good observations and feedback to be able to move forward with a diversified Alberta.

With that, I'm looking forward to the rest of the discussion as this moves through all the different steps. I do totally support this bill going forward. I recommend that all members support this bill wholeheartedly going forward. Obviously, I guess, only time will

tell that it stays a private member's bill, is treated as a private member's bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act, and I want to acknowledge the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his hard work and dedication on this private member's bill. I think you know when you've got a good bill, a good private member's bill, especially when both sides of the House are able to support it – and I appreciate the support from the opposite side of the House – quite frankly, when getting an opportunity to speak to it is kind of like trying to buy a ticket to a popular concert. You've either got to be quick or get in line. I don't know which it is.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, Albertans sent us a clear message in this last election that they want a government that will put in place the conditions that will simply get them back to work so that they can provide for their families and be prosperous. This Bill 201 is an opportunity for economic growth in a sector that has massive growth potential and proven roots here in Alberta, I mean, all the way back to the early bush pilots, that opened up our whole northern part of our country, to the military air bases and air training that took place in the Second World War.

Now we find ourselves on the cusp on the next great era of aviation, which is the very exciting development of drone technology in its many varied forms. I did a little looking. We actually already have companies in Alberta who are providing drone technology: crop monitoring, utility inspections, forestry and wildlife surveys, business intelligence gathering of many different kinds, freight delivery, confined and dangerous spaces inspections, and data acquisition of all different kinds. Those are just a few of the technologies that are already finding a foothold here in our great province.

Alberta has truly ideal geographical conditions and the necessary infrastructure to be a hub for the aerospace industry, and that includes both the computer and software programmers here in Alberta as well as significant manufacturing, skilled labour, and capacity to be engaged in service and even airframe construction and other things like that. Our wide open prairie skies, favourable weather conditions, leading-edge research facilities and university programs, one of only two drone testing ranges in Canada, and 22 certified airports, among many other regional aerodromes, all contribute to this opportunity and the infrastructure that's already there. They really make Alberta be one of the best places in the world to lead the way in the aerospace industry.

Our international airports will continue to be growing economic powerhouses in the province. In 2018 – I think we've already heard the numbers – 24 million, 25 million passengers passed through Edmonton and Calgary international airports. That number is going to continue to grow as Alberta becomes more connected with the globe. Air cargo capacities continue to increase as the world economy becomes more interconnected, and the port of Alberta, meaning the Edmonton International Airport, is one of the greatest air freight centres, actually, in North America. It has one of the closest locations to Asia apart from Alaska, so it's a direct and affordable transportation port for air freight. Alberta has tremendous capacity to expand our aerospace sector to the point of really being a global leader.

There's no doubt that in the current economic conditions that are challenging many industries in Alberta, Bill 201 is an opportunity to support the development of one of Alberta's growing industries, which employs more than 10,000 Albertans. The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly hard on those workers and their

families. International travel restrictions and domestic travel guidelines have resulted in record low demand for air travel. Although the pandemic has been a challenge for many, we must be forward looking. We must look ahead and create opportunities for the future. Bill 201 is a step toward a more prosperous future.

I think even of, in my own riding, a couple of local airports. Even there, we have air mechanical services provided. We have emergency air access provided through those airports. We have pilot training using those airports and, I should also mention – nobody has said yet – a tremendous representation of recreational fliers. Even there, we have older airplanes being restored, people flying them, new airplanes being developed, people flying formation. There's a lot of recreational air activity that happens in our province as well, that contributes to our economy, to tourism, and to other things as well.

The establishment of this council described in Bill 201 would allow for better co-ordination of the many different segments of our aerospace industry. This council will be comprised of various sectors, including airlines or commercial area aviation, pilot training institutions and programs, aerospace engineering, and emerging technology, to mention a few. The council will undertake research and analysis on the industry, consult with key groups, and provide annual recommendations to the minister on how to improve aviation, aerospace-related services, infrastructure, training, and the industry in general.

We need to take steps to support our economic recovery as we relaunch. We need to take steps to give hard-working Albertans just the conditions they need to succeed, and Bill 201 is one of those very important steps. As we grapple with the effects of the pandemic, especially on the aviation sector, our government needs to lay the foundations for a recovery that isn't just fast but reliable and long lasting. There is no limit to what Albertans can achieve with their hard work and their spirited determination so long as the conditions are right for them to succeed.

For that reason, I support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the sponsoring member as well as all members of this Assembly, for this opportunity for us to engage in this debate on a private member's bill. It seems like it's been a little while since we've had an opportunity to engage in private members' business, so I am keen to be able to do that.

Just a little context first. With the boundary redraw in the last election, one new neighbourhood was added to the area I currently represent, Blatchford, which is the area where the old downtown airport used to be here in Edmonton and is also home to the Alberta Aviation Museum, which I think, hopefully, all of us have had a chance to visit. If you haven't, it's great, and it's not far from here, just a few minutes up Kingsway road. When they're reopened, I hope that everyone gets a chance to engage there a little bit because it's a great piece of Alberta history but also air aviation in general, a piece of their history that I think all of us have an opportunity to engage.

I do have a few questions about this bill, number one being the Alberta aviation association and what kind of engagement they had in creating it because I imagine from reading through this that a lot of the mandate that they have probably overlaps very closely with the proposed new council. That would be my first one.

And then my second one would be around the 10 different categories that are listed, saying that they must be included on the council. That seems like it's at least a 10-member committee

because, of course, it doesn't cap it to those that are listed and even those that are listed, in some of the categories, have two or three different options. So I have some concern that this could become a very substantial council and as some of my colleagues have mentioned, questions around duplication or redundancy.

Also, I would add that cost would be a question. How are we going to ensure that this council is operating as cost-effectively as possible? And then I guess another question would be overlap between this council and the mandate for the minister responsible for economic development and trade because it seems like there is a lot of overlap in those areas as well. Those are some of the questions I have early on about this.

I want to add that I think I'm excited for the opportunity one day, as it might present, to be on an airplane again. It seems like it could be a long time from now. Of course, when we do, we want to make sure it's done safely. I know that there have been – I think it's WestJet that says: only about 5 per cent of the flight traffic that they had this time last year. That is of course concerning for them, their shareholders, and for all of us who I think have very proudly flown on WestJet, enjoyed hearing jokes and even getting a chance to tell a couple of them on their flights in the past. It's one airline that I think has an exciting western tradition.

4:00

Of course, Air Canada, I think, plays an important role, as do other local airlines that we have in the province of Alberta that have provided, particularly to rural and remote communities, a connection and a touchpoint for so many who can feel isolated from the larger centres. Wanting to know what kind of engagement there was with those rural airports would be another piece for me.

Lastly, I'm glad that it's mentioned that one of the groups for including is around rescue, emergency air ambulance. I'll say that, you know, growing up as a kid in the rural north, when you'd see STARS or a fixed-wing flyover, you obviously were worried about the people that you cared about, but you knew that help was on the way. Making sure that we have a strong network for emergency evacuation and treatment is really important, I think, to folks particularly in rural and remote communities and, I'd say, to all Albertans. I think that there's a reason why Albertans generously support organizations like STARS even in times of difficulty, because we really do value the contributions that they bring and the world-class leadership. I was proud, as minister, to be able to support the acquisition of a new helicopter for them, something that I think was long overdue and will be put to good use in supporting folks throughout the province.

Those are probably the main questions – the size of the committee, the cost of the committee, and the duplication between other very valuable associations and the minister's mandate – that I would say are the main cautions that I would have. Of course, we all want to operate efficiently and effectively, I expect, and that means fulfilling our individual mandates and responsibilities as well as empowering those to contribute. How do we do this in a way that doesn't create more bulk, more duplication but does in fact help achieve the mandate which, I think, does align already quite clearly with the aviation association as well as with the minister?

Those are the questions that I'll leave you with, and perhaps government members can add to that part of the conversation. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council



Act, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing it forward. I also appreciate the amount of time that that member has spent not only looking into the issue or issues, I suppose, within the aviation sector but also advocating specifically on this issue. You know, thinking back over the last four years of discussions, whether it be value-added agribusiness, which was studied in front of one of our committees, or the discussion about daylight saving time, which, of course, was a very exciting conversation, the industry had some part, I suppose, but a large voice in coming to the decision of that committee, I would also venture to say. I appreciate that that member has always worked hard to bring forward the concerns and ideas of the aviation sector, and I appreciate that the member is bringing this bill forward.

I also think back to a time in 2016 when I actually had the opportunity to go to a local business, Ocean Odyssey Inland – I'm not totally sure if it's in my constituency or just bordering – right off Stony Plain Road. They provide wonderfully fresh fish of all kinds to Edmontonians. I remember having a discussion with them about their direct line to Iceland through Icelandair. Unfortunately, I think that that relationship has maybe changed over the years, and those flights have possibly been cancelled. I remember when the opening of their new location came up and just how proud they were and how proud Icelandair was to be able to have that kind of relationship. I hope that, moving forward, we will see many more opportunities like that, whether it be in, once again, the agribusiness industry or any other industry, because there are great opportunities for us to collaborate with the aviation industry.

I appreciate some of the conversations that members in the NDP have brought up as well in terms of wanting to make sure that the composition of the council is to the greatest benefit of all members, so that would be something that I look forward to seeing moving forward. You know, when the NDP was in government, we had a lot of discussions about the importance of GBA plus, or gender-based analysis, when we're talking about the makeup and composition of these councils, and I hope that the member takes that issue very seriously, because the fact is that we have many different sectors here, whether it be tourism, pilot training, aircraft maintenance, the labour side of things or the workers that work in these facilities. The fact is that their perspective, whether they be male or female, is going to be different, so that's something that I think should be considered as well.

I also think back to when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview had the opportunity to go to I believe it was San Francisco with many local leaders – I believe the mayor of Edmonton was there, some academics, and some local business leaders from the Edmonton International Airport – and the opportunities they had to discuss what direct lines from San Francisco to Edmonton could hold in terms of bringing professionals here and bringing new businesses. Specifically, I believe that at the time we were talking about interactive digital media businesses, video game companies and other sorts.

Then we look at what's happened over the last year since the UCP has come into power, and some of those conversations around the interactive digital media tax credit and the capital investor tax credit, you know, have gone by the wayside. In a lot of cases those programs have actually disappeared, which is quite frustrating for me because I saw a lot of opportunity in those programs in terms of bringing new capital to Alberta. We saw those programs applauded by chambers of commerce across the province. Unfortunately, once again, when the UCP came into government, they did not feel that diversification and ensuring capital investments and capital being available to Alberta businesses was necessarily as much of a priority as we saw it, I suppose.

I can only think, if this council was in place when those decisions were made, what conversation they may have brought up in terms of: is the capital investor tax credit working, and is it bringing more business to the aviation sector among the many other sectors that it was benefiting? Once again, when we look at some of the other decisions that this government has made, the cancellation of the rappel program and cuts to air ambulances and rural airports: what conversations might be had at the table of those councils if they were a council at the time of those decisions being made?

Once again I would echo the comments of I believe Edmonton-Decore about the fact that we need to ensure that this is not just another opportunity for partisan appointments, that if there are things changing in terms of government policy, whether it be the cancellation of diversification priorities, this council has the opportunity to raise their concerns and that they'll be raised in a nonpartisan way, not simply having the answer given to them by the government. That is always something that I'm concerned about. I do believe that in other instances of councils or committees put together by the UCP government, we've seen that exact same thing happen and that it's essentially a front to back up their decision that has already been decided.

Once again I would just highlight the fact that it has not been an easy couple of months for the aviation sector. We've seen several thousand layoffs. WestJet announced layoffs for 3,000 workers and the projected cancellation of 4,000 flights. We saw Air Canada announce 20,000 layoffs. This is an industry that needs as much support as it can get.

Once again, I'm happy to see this bill brought forward by the member. I appreciate that there are going to be benefits – or I can only hope that there will be benefits – because of the creation of this as long as we ensure that there is not overlap with a lot of the work that is already being done.

I would just point out – and it's not really a big issue for me, I suppose. The member that brought this forward said – it was a quote close to this; I don't want to get it wrong – that only under the direction of an advisory council will aviation problems be solved to some extent. I imagine that there are many people within the sector already working together on these issues, and I think that they've done a good job with this, but once again anything that we can do to help this industry is something that we should be doing.

**4:10**

On that point, I would just say that the NDP opposition has brought forward issues of this government not taking action, whether it be specific to aviation or any other industry, to support the implications and consequences of COVID-19 on these industries. So while, once again, I support that we're moving forward with this council or should be moving forward based on the vote of this House, there is much more that should have been done and continues to need to be done, whether it be a financial reprieve for these airports, whether it be support for the workers who have been laid off, the thousands upon thousands of workers who have been laid off. We need to support them. Hopefully, the conversations that come up at the committee will be: how can we get these workers that have been laid off back to work as soon as possible, how can we ensure that value is being added to the processes that already happen within the aviation industry to ensure that more jobs are being created, and other issues similar to those.

Once again, I do appreciate the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek bringing this legislation forward. I do plan to support it. I hope that we will see more on this front in terms of supporting the aviation industry in ensuring that we can get those workers back to work as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I'm so grateful to my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for tabling this piece of legislation.

Aviation truly has shaped our province, and it's amazing when we think – I think that it's often overlooked, but if we really look at the aviation industry, it really touches so many different aspects of our economy here in Alberta, whether that is the agriculture industry through crop-dusting, whether that's the tourism industry by bringing tourists from around the entire globe to our province. It touches e-commerce and allows businesspeople to travel, and it even touches manufacturing and allows us to get cargo shipments and online sales to other jurisdictions. So it's an often overlooked industry, but truthfully it touches our lives and our economy in more ways than we often realize. I think that's why today it's so important that this legislation has been tabled and why I'm so proud and happy to support it and support the work that's been done by my colleague for Calgary-Fish Creek.

As I said, it's an integral piece of our economy. It's key to supporting our global networks, and it's going to increasingly become an important part of our economy as globalization takes place and as online shopping continues and travel becomes more accessible. It's going to continue to be a growing industry, and I'm happy to support it.

If we look at our own province, there are hundreds of small, regional airports just around our own province. These small airports connect our rural communities to each other, they connect our rural communities to the rest of Canada, and they connect our rural communities to the world. Those are really important to support. If we look at my own riding of Banff-Kananaskis, we have the Springbank Airport. The Springbank Airport is actually one of the larger regional airports in the province for a small rural airport. The Springbank Airport is a top provider of flight training in Alberta. It's a hub for community support for forestry protection. They do canine training for the police at the airport. They are an operations base for STARS air ambulance. They're a base for the Calgary police HAWCS. They're home to air tankers and water bombers that protect us during the forest fire seasons, and they're home to many hobbyists and people who just own a private pilot's licence and fly for recreation.

Also, many of you may have attended the Springbank air show every summer. I believe, actually, Madam Speaker, that it used to be held in your neck of the woods, and the Springbank Airport scooped it up. Nonetheless, I hope that you and all the other members of our Legislature today have been able to attend that air show in the past. It's big, and it's amazing to attend.

I'm very proud of our aviation industry Alberta-wide, and I'm very proud of YBW, which is our Springbank Airport right here in Banff-Kananaskis. As I kind of mentioned, the aviation industry is so diverse, and it supports so many different facets of our economy. If we just look at the numbers, in 2018 just Alberta's aviation industry alone moved 115,000 tonnes of cargo. Between just the Calgary and Edmonton airports the aviation industry in Alberta supports nearly 70,000 jobs, and that doesn't include all of the hundreds of rural and regional airports and aerodromes that we have in our province. So the aviation industry truly is large in Alberta. It's often overlooked, but it's something that we can't overlook anymore. We need to make sure that it continues to be an important part of our economy.

As I kind of mentioned, these rural airports deliver significant spinoff benefits to our rural communities and tourist destinations. I mean, obviously, the rural part of my riding is supported through

the Springbank Airport in many ways, but if we look at the other side of my riding as well, Banff and Canmore, these communities thrive off tourism, and without the aviation industry we wouldn't really have very many tourists. My riding, of all places, is significantly important to the aviation industry and vice versa. I think it's really important that we continue to support this industry going forward. With this legislation we will create an advisory committee on aviation, and that will help our government, hopefully with co-operation from our opposition, which it sounds like we're going to have from a lot of them, to take further steps and develop this job-creating and thriving industry here in Alberta.

The committee that would be established in this legislation would be a guiding voice to protect our aviation industry, foster its growth, and make sure that we remain globally competitive in an ever-changing world. Even in the world today we're still sort of going through COVID-19, but hopefully the worst is behind us. Nonetheless, this global pandemic really hit our aviation industry incredibly hard. In fact, almost all movement between borders, whether those be national or international, had ceased for some time. It's important now more than ever that we support our struggling aviation industry. I think this legislation, truthfully, couldn't be more timely, and I'm very happy to see it brought forward now.

If we look at this legislation, the broader objective of the strategic aviation advisory council would be to ensure this industry gets a strategic focus and that that focus is brought forward to our government straight from industry participants. It will be brought forward to the relevant ministries to ensure that we develop a strong and diverse and sustainable aviation sector right here in Alberta that builds upon our already rich aviation history as a province. If we look back at our aviation history, it's actually quite rich here in Alberta. Dating back to 1927, we were known as the Gateway to the North. From Edmonton's Blatchford field, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora actually just mentioned, to the British Commonwealth training program, that ran here from 1939 to 1945, Alberta has a rich history steeped in aviation, and I'm excited to see that continue, hopefully through the passage of this legislation.

Through this council's annual recommendations we hope that we'll be able to focus our existing knowledge of the aviation industry, our expertise and capacity, competitive advantages, and the entrepreneurial spirit of all Albertans into a long-term strategic advantage and industry for Alberta. I am very confident that if we get this legislation passed, it's going to be a strong economic driver and, actually, a strong driver of diversification in our province. So I'm very happy to support this legislation. I think it's incredibly important that we support our aviation industry.

I guess I will close with a little story about childhood Miranda. When I was – I don't know – kindergarten aged, I think maybe five or six, my dad took me to the RCMP barracks and museum in Regina. They had this, I guess, model plane, you could say, but it was essentially a real plane, just half of one. You got to go into the cockpit, and it had all the buttons, all the bells and whistles. I mean, obviously, the plane doesn't fly, but this half plane was sitting there. My dad went in and pressed all the buttons, and this airplane started whirring, and all the noises came on. Little me thought that my dad was going to take off and leave me behind. From what I'm told and what I recall, I threw a fit in the RCMP museum. I absolutely lost my mind. I was terrified that my dad was going to take off in this model airplane and leave me behind forever and that I might never see him again.

I guess, in closing, just as the little Member for Banff-Kananaskis may have thought that my dad was going to take off in that airplane,

I really hope that the passage of this legislation will help Alberta's aviation industry take off as well, and I'm very happy to support it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's wonderful news, unlike when Springbank stole the air show from Airdrie. You'll be happy to know that I did my own flight training at Springbank Airport in Calgary as well, and you'll be grateful to know that it didn't continue.

I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to spend a few minutes talking about this bill. As you will hear as I go along, I'm generally supportive of the intention of this bill and the direction that this member is attempting to go in terms of providing support to what I think is a pretty fundamental agency, resource, and institution in the province of Alberta in terms of our aviation, airports, and all of the members involved. So it's very nice to be able to say that I appreciate the work that has been done to bring this into the House. You'll also hear from me some concerns that I have in a number of different areas. They don't stop me from wishing this bill to be passed, but I certainly want to take the opportunity to address them.

4:20

First of all, I think that air transportation in this province is incredibly important not only to the present of this province but also its history. I believe that the airlines and the aviation history in this province have served us by initially being one of the primary links bringing the province together so that we weren't isolated communities. When we think back to Wop May, for example, bringing medicines to northern Alberta, to many of the indigenous communities and the smaller communities of northern Alberta, I certainly think that that was one of the, you know, important historical events that helped to remind people dispersed around the province of Alberta that, in fact, they were part of a larger province and not isolated completely. Thank goodness they're even less isolated now than they once were, and it is because of the bravery and hard work of people like Wop May and others, who helped to create that identity here in this province. Therefore, I want to thank them for that.

I think also, you know, that the air transportation, aviation industry has served our nation. When we think back to the history of Blatchford field here in Edmonton and to some of the programs in southern Alberta, where during the wars people came to receive training in aviation so that they could go out and serve our country later on, many of the flyers who flew in both the first and second world wars had experience here in the province of Alberta and were highly supported by the aviation industry in its nascent days. I think they deserve support and respect from us today, and giving them a voice to continue to participate in the province is something which I absolutely support.

Also, I believe that the aviation industry has done a third major piece of work, and that is that it helped to connect us to the world. The aviation industry has made sure of that both in the economic sense – and that is that we have trade throughout the world now – but also in the personal sense, that people now have fairly easy access to travel around the world, to get to know the rest of the world, to meet other people, to understand their concerns. To share our common humanity has been very much underpinned by this aviation industry. Therefore, I mean, I have deep respect not only for the work that they do every day but for the meaning that their work has had in helping us to create a sense of identity, of shared nations trying to build a better world for all of us.

I really want to start by saying how much respect I have for people in aviation. I know that when I spent my short time in the Canadian Naval Reserve, we used to say less positive things about our comrades in other parts of the Armed Forces, and they also had names for us. But, in truth, it was all in kidding, and we certainly, you know, appreciated the role that each other had in terms of this province. So I begin by saying thank you for bringing this bill forward, and thank you for giving us an opportunity to highlight the significance and importance of aviation to the province of Alberta.

I'd like to go on to talk a little bit about some of my concerns. I have some concerns that there has been an absence of information, concern, attention brought to the aviation industry during this time of COVID by this province, and I'm very concerned about some of the stressors that they've been going through right now. We know, from talking to some of the organizations, that there have been over 20,000 employees from airlines associated with the province who have lost their jobs due to COVID or who at least had time off, unable to, you know, perform the work that they do. I'm very concerned about that group of people.

I'm very concerned for the airlines, who are saying that they are down to as little as 5 per cent of their past passenger capacity in the last little while. You know, we have agencies like WestJet, which essentially started here. We have a fine tradition of starting airlines in Alberta. We've had three or four major national airlines start here in this province. I would hate to see us get to a point where another national airline that started here in Alberta finds itself unable to continue.

I guess I am concerned that so far the only thing we've heard from the government side of the House with regard to aviation in this province is this bill. I guess my hesitation is that I feel like it's a bit of a tepid response to, I think, a very significant concern for the well-being of aviation in this province, that we would just simply say that we're going to have another committee. But I don't want to disparage the committee. I certainly want them to get together. I certainly want them to provide information to the government on an annual basis, as suggested by the bill.

But I think it also would be a better bill if it was supported by work from the government, if the government was saying at the same time: we are going to support our private member's bill that has this committee come together, but we would also really like to work on the things that will make those airlines and the aviation industry successful such as some kind of supports to allow them to have a greater role in the massively important cargo industry, that is important now, in this time. We know that while people are staying at home, they have certainly gone out less, certainly travelled less by airline, but that hasn't necessarily stopped them from shopping. They have indeed increased their amount of online shopping quite dramatically, and airlines are fundamentally important in the delivery of those goods. I would like to see the government step up and sort of adhere to the intention of this bill: some actual, practical supports in terms of moving our industry forward so that we can take a bigger chunk of the pie of cargo work that is being done.

I'd also like to see a greater emphasis on some of our smaller airports. We have two very large international airports in this province, which have various ways of being successful. The Edmonton airport, for example, has the largest land mass owned by an airport of any airports in the country of Canada. They have been very wise, I think, over the last 10 or 15 years or whatever it's been to use that land mass. They've built a golf course. They've built hotels. They've built an industrial area. They've built, you know, Costco stores, a casino, and a variety of other things, I think. They have some other mechanisms to sustain themselves.

But that's not completely true in smaller airport areas. When I travel to Peace River, when I travel to Grande Prairie, when I travel to Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay, and when I go to Lethbridge and Slave Lake and Medicine Hat, I look at all of these airports, and I can see that they don't necessarily have the wherewithal to withstand some of the stressors that probably they are experiencing under COVID. I would really like to see this government step up and find some very specific ways to address the extra demands that are on them in these smaller communities because I think it's fundamentally important that we maintain these airports in these smaller communities. They are an incredibly important link for this province of Alberta. As I started with in my speech, I really think they help to define the province of Alberta, flying into all of these smaller communities, and I certainly would like to see them be supported moving forward.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's not often I get too excited – well, I do get excited; I can't say that – but I really get excited about this one. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, people know that I'm not huggy, but if it wasn't a COVID thing, I'd probably give you a big hug for this one. You know, this is fantastic.

Gateway to the North: that's what we were known as for a number of years. A lot of folks have talked about flying; I'm actually a pilot. There's this kind of old joke: wait two minutes, and if you don't know who the pilot in the room is, they'll announce it. I didn't even get to two minutes, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, you didn't finish your flight training, but I would love to invite you out to one of four or five air training facilities that we have right within the greater Edmonton regional area, three of which are sitting out at my airport in Villeneuve, which has the second-largest air show in Canada, next to Abbotsford. So as far as Springbank, it's great. Ours is greater. I'm very happy to promote that.

4:30

When we're talking about some of the industries that are taking place, back and forth, we've talked about the big commercial ones. Folks seem to fixate on the large airports, but actually there are tons of small ones. As private pilots we were COVID proof. We've been flying around to your areas, popping in to these different locations.

Let me tell you what. I actually went on a trip a number of times with a small aviation community out of Springbank, and we flew down to Florida. We went down there. We went down to Oshkosh. We've got people in our field – actually, Scott Holmes, as an example, an actual aircraft racer in the CAFE division, flew over to China, took his plane over and actually competed in China.

As far as some of these communities and where we're at, I'm not sure if the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has identified the amateur-built portion of it. When you look at the amateur-built community, whether folks realize it or not, you kind of have the conventional ones, which are certified aircraft, and then there's all this other crazy stuff. Within the aviation community itself both on the U.S. and the Canadian side you're allowed to experiment. You're allowed to come up with new aeronautical designs. You're allowed to prove the mathematics on it. This is where the most rapid advancement takes place.

Coming back to Springbank Airport, there is a custom aircrafter, a guy by the name of Ralph Inkster, down there. He's phenomenal. He's kind of known as the RV aircraft guy. He actually built my first airplane. I went down there with him, hammered some rivets, did all that, learned all about aeronautics, the actual hands on of building these.

Ross Farnham from SDS solutions actually builds the brain buckets that sit on top of the aircraft engines themselves and actually run it, so all the electronic fuel injection and everything else. Those things are distributed world-wide. There are a bunch of aircraft engineers down there. They're actually reconstituting an Avro Arrow, you know the bird that went away back in the '50s, and, you know, the movie that Dan Aykroyd did and all that. They're actually reconstituting one that's going to fly. So there are tons of skill sets.

Coming back to the air show, a guy by the name of Richard Skermer kind of spearheaded that. We've got Mayor Hnatiw, who is spearheading the Villeneuve landing network, which I am very proud to be part of. And we've got support from the Edmonton International Airport, obviously, on that one. We're talking about logistics, tying everything in that regard, obviously, with the freight movement and trains, et cetera, et cetera, and everything we have to offer. St. Albert is on board with it. The city of Edmonton is on board with it. We've got three regional counties on board with it. We're looking at investing and growing this.

Out on that field again, when I start looking at the differences of what we have to offer, Wichita comes to mind, Wichita, Kansas, the birthplace of Boeing, Cessna, Garmin. You know, I was talking to an aircraft maintenance engineer the other day who has to fly all over the place and actually works on these big jets, whether it was WestJet or whether it was Air Canada or whoever. He actually works on the big ones. He still works on the small ones. His whole aviation career was launched literally out of a small aircraft, Villeneuve again. I hate to keep mentioning it, but it's a really good one. Everything that he's done is literally international, world-wide. He says that the similarities that we could have, what we could have that we never take advantage of – we could be Wichita north.

When you think about all these aircraft that are parked right now, there would have been a golden opportunity to fly these 737s, drop them in here, do the teardowns, do the maintenance and everything else, take advantage of our disparage in the dollars and the marketplace, and get these reconstituted and back out.

If I look locally, when I went to paint my aircraft, I had to fly out to Penticton to have it done because my local field didn't have the facilities for it. So it's kind of a hand-to-mouth thing because there hasn't been a regional focus. But then again I look at success stories like Viking Aircraft. They buy up type certificates from these other aircraft, the Cessna Caravan, et cetera, and now they've got them. They're building these aircraft, fantastic homegrown, Alberta-made, Canadian-made solution, and we don't hear a thing about it, even from my own colleagues. They're kind of wondering: is this really required? Do we need another committee, another board? Yeah. Unless you're actually from that community, you don't see it. You don't see all the potential. We've got companies like Graphene Leaders Canada. They could potentially apply their graphene technology to what we're doing here in aviation.

There are tons of things that I keep finding as an MLA, that I stumble upon, that connect these threads. When we're talking economic viability for small communities, small communities actually took possession of these airports a number of years ago. As a member of the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association I was flying my own aircraft. I own one, and I'm also part of these other organizations. The biggest thing that we have to sell all the time is to these communities that have them because they don't realize the golden gem that they have. There's lots of us, you know, whirlybird guys that want to go up for a flight and spend a couple of hundred dollars to go and get a hamburger. There's no place to go. Like, a lot of these little regional airports, they're sitting on gems. You would literally have people flocking in from all over the province and across Canada if you had decent fuel rates, if you gave a

courtesy car there so that somebody could just go and grab the car and head over to the local cafe. You would have that. There's the paradigm shift. When I'm flying across the States and I head into Wichita or Black Rock or any of these other ones, they literally roll out a red carpet. If there's not a commercial jet sitting there, they'll roll out a red carpet, they'll offer you a courtesy car, they'll offer you, you know, four or five different places you can go to get a bite to eat, and people literally migrate towards those areas.

When we're looking at other advancing technologies, Pegasus Imagery, here are guys that are sitting up at the Edmonton International Airport. We're trying to get them out to Villeneuve again. They've seen a gap in the actual drone technology, so between what you have for military drones and what you have for the domestic drones. What they're doing is finding a solution that comes up in between. So now you can take all this imagery from guys that have served for a number of years in the Forces, where they have the drones, deploy them, do all the good things, and now they're trying to put that and bring it back into our own market and advance that. When you've got companies that are actually developing the components that are sent over to Asia and put together in the drones and then brought back to us, it seems like we should maybe short-circuit that and start building these technologies here.

I was very pleased to see that my kids are starting to learn about aviation in school. This is fantastic. You want to get kids hooked, get them involved. You want the artificial intelligence dialogues. You want the programming dialogues. You want all of those. Get them hooked on mathematics. Get them hooked on these types of things. Give them a place to work. Give them a place to dream. I was just that farm kid looking at those aircraft ripping overhead and never thought I'd get a chance to, and I did because that community is so welcoming. There might be people on Harley-Davidsons that won't wave at a guy riding a Honda, but if you're in an airplane, regardless of whether you're flying the big iron or you're flying the small stuff, everybody is down to the basics. It's down to the basis of: you fly.

You know, there's another saying out there that the second-greatest thrill to man is flight; the first one is landing. There are lots of skills that go into piloting and learning about all the weather and all the characteristics there and then also fuel management and human factors and all those things. Fantastic. It teaches you that discipline. There's another one, too, out there that says that there are no brave old pilots. So there's something to that.

When you start talking about that industry and how welcoming it is and where we can go with it, it literally opens up connections around the world. Again, one of the members had mentioned how logistically we're closer or would be on that great circle similar to those trading routes where Alaska was in the heyday prior to the Soviet Union letting flights go overtop of their territories at an undisclosed amount, which they still haven't said.

We're strategically poised, and we're so darn Canadian about it. We've lost the fact that this was the gateway to the north. We've lost the fact that Wop May opened up a ton of things, that we had connections, and all these, you know, Billy Bishop and a ton of other unaccounted heroes that we forget about that had that community and that torch to sense that, yeah, we need to remember our roots. We need to know that we can. We need to think big again, and there's nothing like an aircraft flying overhead and seeing a child's eyes light up when they realize that they can do that. Even so much as when we had the Snowbirds taking a flight over Canada – and, unfortunately, that tragic event out in British Columbia – but the fact that that uplifted so many people's spirits, because whether you actually get to fly in a cockpit, whether you maintain those aircraft, whether you just actually enjoy them going by, it's

something that we can be proud of. It's something that can bind us. It's something that lifts us out of what our problems are.

I'll tell you what, Madam Speaker, it's like sitting on God's doorstep when you're up there. I absolutely love going around and taking pictures of everyone's constituencies, dropping in at your airports and talking to the local folks there when I have my day off, because we have such a blessed province. Getting the industry to work together, to look at the things that we can actually build and diversify our economy – aeronautics is a massive economy that we've kind of stumbled over for a number of years. These are the things that we can do better than most, and we're tripping up on it.

I'm trying to look at my notes to see if I missed anything. I've mentioned a few folks. What I'd like to say is that we need to do better. We can do better. We can support this industry when we take it seriously. With that focus, like we've done on the other pillars of our economy, this can be another major one that we can capitalize on, again, taking advantage of our neighbours next door.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also support Bill 201 in establishing an advisory council. As the hon. member mentioned, a lot of the indigenous people up north in the rural communities rely on that aviation service up there because they're only accessible by air, so it's important that they have a voice and are able to be consulted with. This last year really magnifies the need for continued aviation service in northern Alberta, whether it's for fighting fires like we had last year or bringing in PPE and the test supplies for COVID this year, bringing in food supplies, or rescuing people from the floods. It's so needed, and it shows the great need for a continued safe and reliable aviation service.

4:40

My wife's uncle was one of the original bush pilots up north, in northern Alberta, and he's told me many stories. I lived with him when I was going to NAIT and he was working at Gateway aviation, talking about flying indigenous people to their traplines. He would take up supplies and dogs and sleds and drop them off. They'd make a note that two months later at this time they'd meet on the river, and he'd pick them back up again. He told me one story. He flew in and picked up all of the supplies and the hides and the dogs, and they got everybody loaded up in the airplane. They had just taken off and the dogs got into a big fight on the plane, so he's fighting the dogs off and three people are wrestling dogs and tying them down and they finally made it back in. After that there was a new rule: when dogs got on the planes, they had to be muzzled. Just some of the funny things that happened way back.

Actually, muskox were brought into northern Alberta at one time from Russia. They had to monitor these muskox, so they would actually fly a herd of muskox into a lake and then land on the lake. They'd go up beside them and lasso them and snub them up to the plane and ear tag them and check them for disease or whatever. They were doing that this one time. When they got on the lake, it was a little smaller than they thought, so when they went to take off, they didn't quite have enough takeoff area and crashed the plane in the end of the lake. No radios back in those days, no supplies. So they fished for a couple of weeks and found enough supplies and stole parts off the plane to patch up the pontoon and took off again and a couple of weeks later landed at the airport, to everyone's surprise that they were even still alive. It was quite the aviation experience in the early days of flight up there. Not a lot of extras.

He told me stories of flying in movie stars. He flew in John Wayne, Chief Dan George, and Lee Marvin for movies that happened in Alberta. There's a rich history of aviation in Alberta. Also, when the diamond mines were first started, they flew in supplies to the diamond mines and then flew the diamonds out. For many years he kept the pipeline corridor safe by flying over and watching for leaks and dropping warnings when people were working on the rights-of-way.

Then at the end of his career he volunteered at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum. That's now the Aviation Hall of Fame. You talked about the Avro Arrow. They've got a full-size model of the Avro Arrow at the Aviation Hall of Fame. If you ever get a chance to stop in Wetaskiwin, I'd recommend you stop in and check out all the different aircraft they have there. They've got everything from the very start of flight right up to some of the aircraft that were used in various wars. It's a very interesting thing, and you could see how important aviation is to Alberta.

I just wanted to thank the member for sponsoring this bill because it is an important part of my family. Thank you again for doing that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201 in second reading?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all the members for speaking to this bill and for many of the passionate stories. What I found in pursuing this bill is that I'm learning things about this broader sector almost every day, in reaching out to people in flight school training and in the drone industry and airport development and so many different facets of this. I'm an old airline guy, as some of the members pointed out. I spent 20 years in the airline industry and rode in lots of cockpits and had a chance to fly in a fabric-bodied Pitts Special and landed at Hong Kong's Kai Tak Airport, which was an experience in itself, but this is a great opportunity to hear from Albertans about that rich history that we have here.

What it points out to me as well is that everybody – if they don't love aviation, they're at least fascinated by it, and it's not just the fact that they can hop on a plane and go somewhere warm in the middle of a long Alberta winter, but it's the fascination with what's up there. Where's it going? I have this flight app now that tells me where every plane is coming from and going to, and I love it because I used to just look up and try and identify the tail and try and figure out where it might be going. Now I can actually see what altitude it's at, whether it's coming from Reykjavik or on its way to San Francisco, and it's really quite fascinating to watch that.

You know, intuitively we all know how important aviation is to our local economies, but it also connects us globally, as was pointed out by so many of our members here today. When you think back that Kitty Hawk was December 17, 1903 – 117 years ago that aircraft flew shorter than the length of a 747 – and here we are today getting on planes, flying 17 hours nonstop halfway around the world, and complaining about rubber chicken.

That aside, it is an amazing thing when I look at what we can do and when we can hop on a plane and be halfway around the world and move people and move goods and bring people to our great province here. This is what is really the focus of this private member's bill and what I think is an opportunity for all of us to embrace.

I recognize some of the challenges and some of the concerns of the members here, but we need to be aspirational, we need to be inspirational, and we need to grab this opportunity to fight for what this province has fought for from the pioneer days of aviation, why

we have a WestJet here that started with three dog-eared old 737s and is now a world-class global airline. We need them here, ladies and gentlemen. We need them here. We need to fight for that. We need to work closely together. We need to take this sector and create a cluster that is there but is not cohesive, and we need to work together in this Chamber, in this Assembly. We need to work outside. We need to build those small airports, give them the hope of economic opportunity, innovation, and success.

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate your support. I hope that we'll be able to move to third reading on this as well. Thank you for the opportunity to learn from all of you as well.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a second time]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Rodeo

502. Mr. Rowswell moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agricultural events.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand in front of the Assembly today and introduce Motion 502. I first considered this motion when two of my constituents, Melissa Guenther and Kellen Snelgrove, approached me, concerned that rodeo and agriculture were not being respectfully recognized in our great province. Melissa is a barrel racer who, although she didn't grow up with rodeo, dedicated much of her adult life to it. Although she is now retired from rodeo, it is still a huge part of her life and something that she's truly passionate about, as a lot of Albertans are. She was the inspiration behind the private member's motion. She and her brother Kellen have been advocating for rodeo's contributions to be better recognized for a long time. Melissa, among other constituents who have reached out to me in recent years, is concerned, concerned that, given the loud minority of activists attempting to shut down rodeos and stampedes in other jurisdictions, rodeo may eventually disappear from Albertans' lives, concerned that these activists don't understand the contributions that rodeo and its related agricultural events make to Alberta's economy and the contribution that it makes to communities.

But, you see, Madam Speaker, rodeo is a piece of history here in the west. The Raymond stampede is a rodeo that happens each year in Raymond, Alberta. The stampede was first held in 1902, and in 1903 they held the first-ever professional rodeo in Canada. This is the most long-standing rodeo in Alberta. Recently, due to the pandemic, this piece of Albertans' history has been postponed until 2021. Nevertheless, Robert Heggie, who is on the Raymond rodeo board, and his family have kept the rodeo alive and thriving for years. Robert and his wife, Laureen, said that, quote, our goal is to keep western culture and heritage alive, but the last few years have been a struggle, competing against today's modern political climate. We're voicing our concerns that more effort needs to be made to preserve and recognize these historical sites instead of eliminating or moving them, and we feel it's crucial to teach our children about Canada's rural western heritage. The Raymond stampede is proud to be on a mission for tradition, and we look forward to future discussions. End quote.

It is a sport for many, and it's a social gathering for others. It's representative of the strong agricultural industry that Alberta holds dear. In Alberta rodeo is enjoyed by people from across the world and across social barriers, not just folks in small towns and rural areas. Rodeo here is a major drive for tourism. The Calgary Stampede

alone had 1.2 million attendees in 2019. To be clear, Madam Speaker, it is not the rodeo that brought folks from across the world to Calgary last July; it was the associated events, the livestock, the markets, and the people.

4:50

Tim Carson is the CEO of Alberta agriculture societies. From Vermilion to La Crête to Lethbridge across our province towns and counties have agricultural associations and societies that work to plan and execute events both in their local community and as a means of bringing visitors to that community and growing their economies. When I asked him about the contributions of rodeo events made in Alberta, he reminded me that agricultural societies in Alberta host over 100 events a year in addition to events hosted by other organizations and groups. He also reminded me of the need to diversify the economy and increase the impact of tourism in our province. Rodeo and heritage events will play a significant role in achieving this success. The rodeos and stampedes that happen across our province every year are opportunities for communities to come together. They're an economic force in Alberta, but they're also built on the backs of volunteers.

Madam Speaker, as I've mentioned, rodeo in Alberta is not limited to festivities of the Calgary Stampede. In my riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright we're thrilled and proud to have the Lakeland rustlers, a group of young men and women competing in rodeo events year-round through Lakeland College. These young students grew up around rodeo and agriculture. They found a way to integrate it into their postsecondary studies because it's something they're passionate about.

A man who's well known amongst rodeo communities in Alberta was once an ambitious young rodeoer like these students. Al Bouchard is a 19-time Canadian Finals Rodeo competitor in tie-down roping, a director for the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association, and grew up rodeoing through many associations. Rodeo has given Al a chance to represent his community on the international stage. He now spends much of his time helping young kids learn to love the sport as much as he did.

Madam Speaker, I hope I've conveyed the message that rodeo in Alberta isn't just a sport. It's not just about trade shows or animals or competition; it's about tradition and community. It brings folks together, and it reminds us all of where these communities came from.

Now, in a time of a global pandemic, many of our most treasured events have either been cancelled or postponed, and our way of life threatened by a public health crisis. The Calgary Stampede has been cancelled for this July. Although the government's relaunch Alberta strategy is now successfully reopening the province, the planners of the greatest outdoor show on earth are saying that they will be looking at fall or even winter events this year. This will have a tremendous economic impact, especially on the people in the communities I have mentioned. This is why I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle more now than ever to vote in favour of Motion 502 and urge the government of Alberta to recognize the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agricultural events.

Madam Speaker, before I finish, I want to take a moment to recognize again the efforts that the rodeo community has made to encourage and promote rodeo in Alberta. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 health precautions Melissa, Kellen, Tim, Al, and Robert couldn't be here today, but I know they are back home in their communities watching, and I'd like to thank each of them for all their hard work at making this sport and its related agricultural events such a big part of rural Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to the private member's motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in support of private Motion 502. I just actually want to thank the hon. member for sharing his stories of the families and talking about the history of rodeo. Something that I feel is very important when we look at, you know, supporting this motion is the fact that rodeo actually teaches our history in Alberta. As young people attend, they get to learn about the different events and what those events actually meant back in the day and what they were used for. Of course, now they're more competitive, but, of course, they all have meaning and purpose. So, of course, I appreciate the hon. member's comments.

One piece that I did want to and one of my colleagues had asked that I bring up today is also, of course, the rodeo in St. Albert, the Rainmaker Rodeo. It has a big turnout as well, and it's another one that, of course, due to COVID there's a lot of uncertainty, and it won't be happening this year. Again, it does have that impact on our local communities. I know lots of people even in Edmonton go out, and that's the closest one that they tend to go and visit but, of course, going out to Ponoka and lots of other areas and different places around the province.

Of course, we recognize that rodeo has a significant financial benefit to the province, and I think that is a piece that many of us forget about. We look at the family history. We look at going together with our family members – and I used to do that when I was a kid – and participating in those activities and just being able to be with family. But, of course, as the hon. member mentioned, the Calgary Stampede, I mean, has been an event that all of us go to and many Albertans go to, and now that it's not going to be happening this year, the province is going to lose about \$540 million of benefit to the city of Calgary and its surrounding areas.

Of course, that's going to have a significant impact, I think, on the local businesses in Calgary and in Airdrie as, Madam Speaker, you would know. It's something that, I think, as we have this conversation this afternoon and we talk about the importance of this, we recognize that impact. Of course, without having these rodeos in our smaller communities and in our bigger communities – and some would say K Days in Edmonton even though that's more about the agricultural component than necessarily the rodeo component. But it's important that we're recognizing the contributions that these different events bring to our communities.

As we look at moving forward and the province's reopening and we think about, you know, how COVID is impacting our province, I think this is something where this is actually a good reminder for all of us in this House. How are we supporting these communities that usually have these really important events that do provide economic stimulus into the communities? What can the government – as we are urging them to look at this motion, what kinds of things can they do?

Of course, you know, we've seen even within the budget that some of the grants that typically some of these organizations would be accessing were cut in the last budget. There were reasons for that, and of course that was pre-COVID, and nobody knew what was going to be happening with COVID and how it was going to be impacting. Of course, being able to look at maybe readjusting some of those grants that typically would be provided to some of these organizations might be something that the government might want to reconsider as looking at this motion. Of course, the cuts to the grants were going to be presumably encouraged to be made up in different ways, and now that these organizations aren't able to host these events, they're not going to be able to generate the

revenue that they would typically need to be able to run them. If they are pushing these events over into the fall or the winter, this may be something where it could be re-evaluated by the government. I mean, that would be something, as we look at this motion, that the government might want to consider.

Of course, the other thing is that we were looking at the diversification of the economy. It's not necessarily just the rodeos, but it's all of the other pieces that are connected to these rodeos and, of course, the agricultural events. You know, Northlands does their K Days, which is more the fair, but then they also host farm days, and they also have the agricultural fair. They have lots of different things that happen at Northlands as well as in Calgary. There are lots of different things that happen that are offset by what the rodeo represents and the economy that it can drive.

Now, in regard to the member's comments – actually, I'll leave that part alone. I won't go into that. I think I'll just leave it there. But, hon. member, I just want to let you know that our caucus will be supporting your motion, and, of course, we want to recognize that rodeo and the agricultural industry and agricultural events in the province are something that we value in our caucus. We look forward to hearing more from other members.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

5:00

**Mr. Horner:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak today in support of private member's Motion 502. The motion urges the government to recognize the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agricultural events. I want to speak about some of those agricultural events, from which rodeo was really born. They're still an active part of many of our lives today.

I appreciate that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has brought this motion forward as it seems especially timely right now, when because of COVID-19 health measures we'll have to try and enjoy July without a Calgary Stampede for the first time since 1912. Even Cheyenne, Wyoming, the granddaddy of them all, has announced they are cancelling this year's iconic event, usually held later in July.

The timing seems appropriate to show this great tradition our support. The sport of rodeo is an important piece of western culture, dating back to the early cowpokes and hands who helped settle the west and wide-open prairies. Preautomobile days these pioneers had a closeness with horses, cattle, and agriculture that I'm sure is impossible for most nowadays to comprehend. You depended on animals for transportation and survival. Agriculture was the dominant driver of the economy.

Rodeo started by people competing in trying to perfect the tasks that were part of their daily routine: who could rope and tie that calf the quickest, who could tame the toughest bronc, who had the fastest horse. Rodeo has developed and evolved since those early days into a world-class, modern-day display of athleticism from both competitors and their animal counterparts. In many areas across North America rodeo and agricultural events like 4-H and livestock shows are cultural pillars within rural communities especially. I grew up and still reside in a very rural area, a sparse, wide-open area dominated by cattle production and a place where this culture is still very alive.

Growing up, as a young lad I can remember thinking that motorbikes were pretty cool, and my father shaking his head and saying: "Not around here. Go catch your horse." It was how my parents grew up and how they wanted to raise their kids, to have those skills and that connection. My dad took it further than most, I

would argue, in that he wouldn't give me a saddle for the longest time, claiming it would make you a better rider: figure that out first. Kids still grow up that way – riding sheep, then steers, competing in gymkhanas, and showing cattle – and at every step they learn and gain a greater appreciation for livestock, animal care and husbandry, and our rich traditions.

I consider myself fortunate in that I've had the opportunity to be around rodeo in different ways most of my life. I started getting on saddle bronc horses at age 15; had the chance to be schooled by some of the greats, like world champ Mel Hyland and later by more recent names like Rod Warren and Rod Hay; rodeoed and travelled with many who were then up and comers but would later go on to be great Canadian champions and ambassadors for the sport, like Dustin Flundra and Scott Schiffner; had many great experiences and met so many wonderful people that I'm still close with today. I have a lot of fond memories from those years, like representing Alberta at the national high school finals in Colorado and riding at the Calgary Stampede.

I'll never forget that first horse at the Calgary Stampede, the late Winston Bruce giving words of encouragement, and the chute boss telling you to hurry up and nod your head: "This is the big show. Don't hold us up." The next thing, you're in the middle of the arena with the sun on your face, trying your best to make the whistle in front of that big grandstand. Quite a feeling. Other times you had to dig your head out of the dirt right in front of the chutes. That happens a lot, too, especially in those early years.

Thinking about our western culture and way of life makes me think back to another great memory of years past, the centennial cattle drive across the British block at Suffield, put on by the Western Stock Growers' in 1996: 2,000 head of cattle, 1,500 people, 1,700 horses, over 100 wagons made the 90-kilometre trek over six days. I was 16 and probably didn't appreciate it as much as I should have at the time, but what an experience. I had the pleasure to be on the horse drover crew in a separate camp, surrounded by some of the best cowboys and cowgirls from Alberta and Saskatchewan, trailing a couple hundred head of horses, a couple of chuckwagons being pulled by mules, camping under the stars, trading off night shifts to keep the herd together. An amazing experience. It truly took you back to another time. It's things like this from which rodeo was born.

It's branding season back home, the time of year for us cow-calf producers that you gather the herds to vaccinate and tag this year's crop of calves, a real community time of year. You work all month to help your neighbours have their day in hopes that when your turn comes, they return the favour. My community still does a lot on horseback. It's still a favourite time of year, a time to get together and see everyone: kids on their ponies, teenagers wrestling calves, and the old boys telling us how much better they were at this than us; sharing a meal, having a drink, really being a community. Even during COVID rural communities are getting this done together, albeit a little differently this year.

I'm happy to support this motion. I know that when I help my daughter with her pony or her first 4-H calf or when my little guy wants to ride a sheep at the local Little Britches Rodeo, this western way of life will continue to be a big part of Alberta's traditions and culture for years to come. It's still a big part of Alberta. I'm proud to be a part of it and proud to stand today and recognize its importance.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of Motion 502. Rodeo and its related agricultural events have significant value in our province. There is historical pride and



western folklore that many families can share in. The roots of rodeo are deep within the province.

Almost everyone knows about the Calgary Stampede – and I will talk about it a little bit later – but did you know that the town of Raymond, all the way to the south, is home to the first-ever stampede in Canada? The first rodeo was held in Raymond on July 1, 1902, a couple of years before our province came into being, and has been held on that date ever since. Each year the town has a massive Canada Day celebration and hosts their annual rodeo. There have been some years when the town tripled in population due to the number of attendees at their local events. The stampede is one aspect of that town's identity and an important part of their history. With a population of just about 4,000 this local event keeps people coming back to experience part of their culture. It brings back family members that have moved away from this small town.

In the early 1900s the sport of rodeo became very popular across this province. In 1912 Guy Weadick, an immigrant Canadian cowboy, along with four businessmen – Pat Burns, George Lane, A.J. McLean, and A.E. Cross – collectively known as the Big Four added the first Calgary Stampede to the Calgary Exhibition. Since then the event has taken place annually and remains one of Calgary's greatest tourist attractions. The Stampede Rodeo and its related agricultural events give the city a chance not only to shine but also to share our rich rodeo history and to educate others about our strong agricultural industry. People should visit the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame in Ponoka if they want to see first-hand the accomplishments of the dedicated cowboys and cowgirls of this province.

Each year towns and cities across the province host their own rodeos. There is even a senior pro rodeo in High River. Local rodeos drive money into local economies and bring people together to celebrate rodeo and cheer for their favourite cowboys and cowgirls.

When a relative or a friend asks me, "When would be the best time to visit Calgary?" I always suggest the first two weeks of July. Do you know why? The Calgary Stampede Rodeo is unique to Alberta and the perfect way to show my guests some of our provincial history and pride. It truly is the greatest outdoor show on Earth, Madam Speaker. Ask anybody.

Alberta really does put the "culture" in "agriculture." The agriculture events that accompany these exhibitions are just as important as the rodeos. Alberta has one of the world's most productive agriculture economies, and it's Canada's second-largest agricultural producer. The sector is diverse and serves many needs. Farming and ranching helped build Alberta's economy and helped to attract early immigrants to our province. Our economy continues to be impacted and shaped by either the successes or challenges faced by this very important industry. Through exhibitions and related events Albertans from all walks of life can learn about agriculture and its significance in our province. Rodeo and agricultural events allow Albertans from the city to have a snapshot into the lives of rural Albertans.

5:10

Madam Speaker, I had the great opportunity to live in Rimbey, where I made friends that dedicated their entire lives to agriculture in this province. I will never forget the years I spent in rural Alberta and the people I met.

When we recognize the significance of rodeo and agriculture, it helps us to understand our history and build meaningful connections. Madam Speaker, I am proud to support Motion 502. By recognizing the importance of ag and rodeo culture, we pay homage to our past, thank those in the present, and look forward to the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to actually stand here today and speak in favour of Motion 502. The importance of this motion is ingrained in the accomplishments of many important Albertans, from Robin Burwash, Davey Shields, Zeke Thurston, Rod Hay, Dale Johansen, Jill Besplug, Debbie Renger, Greg Schlosser, Troy Dorchester, the Sutherlands, Chance Bensmiller, Winston Bruce, and Joe Carbury. The funny part is that this is just a short list of the people, the Albertans, that have had so many contributions in this sport.

I think it's also important that when we talk about rodeo and we acknowledge it, we also acknowledge the other half that's so important to the sport, which is the horses and livestock. They easily sometimes get forgotten, but the reality is that they are half of what goes on in every one of these events. Many times, though they're trying to put a rodeo cowboy in the dirt, they make up 50 per cent of the score that can actually win them the buckle and the prize. You know, growing up as a child myself, I was a huge fan of bull riding, and that's why you've got to mention names like Outlaw and Rambo, Rambo being a five-time Calgary Stampede final choice, a five-time CFR choice for the rough stock. These are forgotten stars of rodeo, and you also have to acknowledge the stock contractors, the announcers, rodeo clowns, feed suppliers, trucking, sponsors, and more. Rodeo has always been rich in this community, and this just proves the spill-off, how many people, how many industries are involved in rodeo itself across Alberta. It also only takes a quick visit to a small-town rodeo cabaret to understand the camaraderie that exists within all of these individuals that make up rodeo within Alberta.

As many other Albertans have, I grew up, my entire life actually, around rodeo. To be honest, I brag about the fact that for almost 10 years I didn't miss a day of the Calgary Stampede, whether it be the rodeo or the chuckwagons. With that, almost every weekend for me growing up during the summer was hanging off the railing of every local rodeo from little britches in High River to Ponoka, Cremona, Morley, just to name a few. This was actually a product of the fact that my father worked for the city of Calgary EMS, was a paramedic, and was a huge fan himself. I'm not going to say that any Canadian would like rodeo more than hockey, but I would say that it was definitely on par for him.

After so many times of having to leave the crowd and rush down and jump over a fence after a cowboy went down, he started his own private ambulance company in the early '80s, and I feel that this decision was on the fact of exactly that, what I spoke to before, what rodeo really embodies, which is community. He saw a need. He was tired of seeing rodeo cowboys get hurt and injured, so he started his own company, and it was based off providing standby for rodeo. He always had a medical kit in his truck, but he thought it was time to actually put a formal presence to assess these cowboys. Many times as a kid growing up, I remember him jumping over that railing, sometimes even before the bull had left the arena, when a cowboy had come down.

After his participation through this and things like the trail of '87 I'm proud to say that his contribution to the heritage of rodeo – he was inducted as a Calgary Stampede pioneer of rodeo in 1995. His love for the sport and recognition of its importance is something that lives, and it still stays with me today. It is actually, really a big part of who I am today.

That's why I strongly believe that it's due time that we give the proper recognition to the rodeo and ag events and their cultural contribution to our province. These are more than just sporting events; they're crucial to the shaping of our province. It's critical that we never forget the part that they play in our society and the

significant impact both in the economy and in our small communities and large communities in our province. Rodeo is undeniably a part of our identity and our culture. Every year we see hundreds of spectators go to small-town rodeos and millions go to the Calgary Stampede. Within that, we see how rodeo also has a very unique way in connecting our local and international communities. To this day as well, small towns continue to host rodeos. Many towns even use the funds from these rodeos as ways to import initiatives, nonprofits, charities. It doesn't matter if these events are amateur or professional. The one thing that remains constant is that overall, when you go to these small-town rodeos, you see the love for the sport.

Alberta is known, I think, across North America as a hot spot. I think it's easily said that you don't have to go far within rural Alberta to see where the roots are embedded within this. Madam Speaker, I could stand up here all day and continue to tell stories and experience and how they've shaped myself and how I feel they've shaped our province and the riding I represent, but I think overall it's just really important to understand and say it over and over again, that rodeo is more than just a sporting event; it's actually a lifestyle. It's a part of our province. Rodeo is about life lessons. It's not just about belt buckles, boots, and prize money. There is a lot within rodeo that can teach you overall about life. These stories, for me, have taught me about resilience, hard work, and determination.

That is why I'm proud to stand here behind and support this motion that my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has put forward. Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this motion. This motion really does recognize the importance that agriculture and rodeo events have within our province, and I urge all members in this Assembly to strongly support this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to join the conversation about honouring rodeo in the province of Alberta. I have, you know, a number of personal memories, of course, beginning when I was just a child attending the Rainmaker Rodeo in St. Albert, which I think has made rodeo very accessible to a lot of people who grew up in the city streets of Edmonton, urban areas, like myself. It certainly has been an incredible part of the history of St. Albert. I'm sure that the Member for St. Albert, who, as mentioned, wants to make sure that gets recognized today, would be happy to know that many of us have positive historical experiences there.

I also have had experiences taking my own children to the Canadian Finals Rodeo, which happened in Edmonton for very many years, and have been able to share that Alberta tradition with my children and get that chance to see the calf roping. Unfortunately, it was not necessarily something that gave great pleasure to my eldest son, who felt very sympathetic toward the calf, but it was, you know, part of the experience – right? – of being there. It's nice to have that and, of course, my opportunities to attend the Calgary Stampede, which is, as they say, the greatest show on Earth and is certainly a part of the historical traditions in the province of Alberta.

5:20

But I want to add onto this that sometimes we think about all of these rodeo Calgary events as cowboy events, and certainly they are. But when thinking of the Calgary Stampede, I want to remind

people that since day one, indigenous people have been involved in rodeo and have had a very important role in rodeo, have been celebrated as some of the best rodeo riders and ropers and chuckwagon drivers in this province.

I'm very proud of the fact that the Calgary Stampede has included what is now referred to as the Elbow River Camp, previously the Indian village. I like the new name better. The Elbow River Camp has been there since day one and, in fact, had a very significant role for particularly the Blackfoot people but all indigenous people in southern Alberta because at a time in our history when we were doing extremely horrible things to the indigenous community, including denying them the right to practise any of their ceremony and gather together in celebration for a variety of things that were true in indigenous culture in this province for 14,000, 15,000 years or whatever the number may be, the Calgary Stampede found a space for them to come and gather and to continue to practise.

Many of the elders, when I sat in Elbow River Camp, were telling me that that is where they were able to maintain their traditions. They were denied to do it on the reserves, they were denied to do it in the communities, but when they went to rodeo, because they were so good at participating in the rodeo and were considered excellent riders and excellent farmhands and participants in the whole various roles in rodeo, they were allowed to gather in tents nearby, in what became known as the Indian village, and to practise ceremony, which they weren't allowed to practise anywhere else. So rodeo has actually helped to provide an opportunity for indigenous people to maintain their culture at a time when they experienced a great deal of oppression. I think it's good for us to remember that indigenous people have been a significant part of rodeo in this province.

We know that while they participated in the rodeos that everyone else did, they also had their own traditions. For example, the Sarcee All-Indian Rodeo was the first all First Nations rodeo. It took place in 1964. Sarcee, of course, now is known as Tsuut'ina to us, but they gathered together all of the First Nations people who were doing extremely well in rodeo but wanted a chance to compete on their own with their peers and friends and put together an excellent rodeo in Sarcee, now known as Tsuut'ina. I think that's, you know, important for us to remember, that they participated.

I know I've had a chance to talk with a number of First Nations chiefs, for example, and other community members who talk about how rodeo helped them find themselves. For example, Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, who many of you will know for a variety of other reasons, head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, of course, grand chief most recently of Treaty 6 area until just this last year, told me about growing up playing hockey with his peers and riding rodeo as well. That was important to him. As well, when I was down in the Blood Tribe, I know I spent time talking with many of the leaders there, and the chief of the Blood Tribe also mentioned to me his passion for rodeo and how he grew up being involved in rodeo and playing hockey – it all seemed to go together, I think, when they tell me the stories of their history – and how great it really was for them. In fact, he still owns many horses and is involved in rodeo.

Of course, we now have the entry of Indian relay in many rodeos around the province of Alberta. I had the chance to see the very first Indian relay event at the Calgary Stampede, which was an incredible event, you know, one rider, three horses, and they're riding full speed around that rodeo track, I guess it is, without any saddles, hopping off one horse, hitting the ground, hopping on a second horse, three horses in a row, not falling off. It's just an incredible feat of athleticism. Very impressed to see that kind of thing happening.

You know, I've also just enjoyed the fact that rodeo, while it is big events and it's big riding and so on, also is about community. It's also about people gathering together and really celebrating each

other, enjoying each other's company, enjoying time together, the same way that many of us in the city of Edmonton, for example, might go to the Fringe to enjoy community time together and eat good food – well, okay; eat street food – and enjoy each other. The rodeo is very much that way.

My wife and I happened to have an opportunity to spend three days at the Kikino rodeo a couple of summers ago. She grew up on a dairy farm in Ontario and so quite knew what a farm fair was but did not know rodeo in her community, in that area. She just talked about how nice it was to be at the Kikino rodeo just enjoying, celebrating the community that was there, not only going to the rodeo itself but all of the activities on the lake and so on and gathering together in the evening to have a community dance, where all the local bands came in, got an opportunity to play for half an hour, and then switched over to the next one. She and I danced the night away and really enjoyed that.

I just wanted to wrap up my comments with talking about how much rodeo has contributed to this province, not only for all of us to enjoy those moments but the fact that indigenous people have been central to the growth of it in this province and continue to be important in maintaining the traditions of rodeo.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for bringing this motion forward, this wonderful Motion 502, talking about the cultural significance of rodeo. A lot of folks categorize me, depending on which day, as the rural MLA or the city-type MLA because the constituency abuts, but I'll tell you what – I'll tell you what – rodeo out in our area has been around forever. When I was asked to speak on this, I was thrilled because we've got the likes of Danny Hayes. Our Member for Drumheller-Stettler will understand that one. Here's a three-time Canadian rodeo champ, born and raised up in little Mayerthorpe. Look at that, he's in the Canadian hall of fame.

When I was growing up – I grew up on a farm, obviously, working cattle – my friends were more into rodeo than I was. At the time I was into dirt bikes and heavy metal music and all that, and my friends were into the actual rodeoing. But I always loved to go to the dances because that was good because you also had the gymkhana and the rodeo at the same time. Hopefully, we can talk about gymkhana and the significance, too. My cousin Roy got right into bronc busting, so that's what he was doing. He just loved the sport, got right into it, got into a lot of the clinics, started supporting it out in that area, out in Wildwood as well. That would be – well, he's normally sitting behind me – the Member for West Yellowhead as well.

My friend Clint Bowman suckered me one time into actually going. Clint was the actual full on cowboy type. I went to this one event, and Clint was telling me how good it was. I had to borrow a pair of boots because I was wearing high-top sneakers when I went to the event because, again, it was for the girls. It wasn't for the rodeoing. Anyway, my buddy got me into the rodeo. Well, I'm on the chute here. Clint goes up just before me. Now, here's a guy that's good. He got smeared out and wiped out along the side of the thing. He was maybe being dragged off in an ambulance and some medical things. When I got on this thing, I thought: well, I can't do worse than that. I didn't make it to the bell. As soon as that thing started going towards the fence, I piled off it like I would on a dirt bike, never made it to the finish line.

A few years later I'm out on a project in Vancouver – well, actually, a number of years later, once I actually had my career – and we end up doing this wrap-up thing. I did do the mechanical bull. Now, being as some of those rhinestone, urban cowboy types are out in Vancouver, this little dude goes up, strutting there, and he jumps on this bull. Well, I couldn't let that down, so we went. And it was eight seconds, eight seconds. Finally, they had to put the thing to whoever could ride it the longest. Well, I came in second. I only made it 28 seconds, but I was out dancing with the ladies on the floor, and that little fella was sitting in the corner nursing his wounds for a while.

The Stampede: there was another thing that, you know – a wonderful thing. I was talking about Wichita a little bit before. We had Wichita and New Orleans. There were a couple of engineering groups that came up, and we did an engineering review up here in Edmonton. They were starting to get and understand our culture. We're doing a small project down in Philadelphia, a transshipment facility. These guys come up, we do this engineering review, and they're asking, "Well, what's Alberta like?" "Well, come up during the Stampede." We did our engineering review in Edmonton, drove them down to the Stampede.

5:30

Now, this, as folks may recall, was back in 2012, '13. Hell or high water, right? If you want to see the fabric of Alberta, that demonstrated it in folds, 10-fold, if you want, by that means. That whole community came together. A massive flood in the area, but that Stampede was going to go on no matter what. What the folks from Wichita and New Orleans – like, they have Mardi Gras; we've got Stampede. Folks understand that persona. Edmonton used to have Klondike Days. It became K Days, expo this, expo that. We kind of lost our way. Nobody knows what it is. But rodeo: everybody knows what rodeo is.

The other one that kind of came up, too, a little connection in our area: there was actually a song written, *The Rodeo Song*. I won't regale any of the verses from it, but it was a guy out in our area. When you've got folks singing specific songs about rodeo and how important it is, no matter how cold it is outside and where you've got to go to get to it – with that, we have tons of tourism.

We talked about aviation a little earlier. Business is done at the Calgary Stampede. Business is done at Ponoka. You have this fabric, and you've got little kids doing the bronc busting, you've got them on the little sheep where you start out with and all the tack-ons that go with it. Again, whether it's First Nations folks, whether it's some of the first African Americans that came up to Canada and started settling here, that were phenomenal rodeo stars – I think one of the other members, from City Centre, had mentioned him before – this has drawn our country together, our province together, and to recognize that this is something that binds us, that brings us together is fantastic.

So without too many more clichés I would like everyone to cowboy up, vote for this motion, and keep that rodeo strong and free in Alberta for years to come.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yee-haw, right?

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the private member's Motion 502? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had this vision of you on a bull, and I've heard you fling it enough times in here. I just, you know – thank you. It's great to be able to stand up today and speak to this motion, Motion 502. I want to thank the Member for

Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for bringing this to our attention and for allowing us to be able to reminisce and to speak about a few of these things today.

You know, I realize that as a teacher of 30 years and as somebody who's lived most of his life in Alberta, it didn't take long for me to realize that rodeo is a part of the cultural fabric. It's a part of who we are. We've enjoyed watching it. I'm not sure, but I'm pretty sure that I can remember going to rodeos in Alberta and in Saskatchewan as early as four and five and six years of age. Our rural rodeo, a rodeo in a small town, is significantly different than the Calgary Stampede, because I can remember being able to sit – I don't know why my parents would allow me to do this – right beside where the rodeo was with my arms and my legs in between the pickets of the gates, watching the rodeo and the horses go by. Now, that's small-town rodeo, okay?

But whether you're an urban or whether you're a rural citizen of this province, I believe that rodeo plays a significant part in your life. I know that, for me, being a social studies teacher, a history teacher, the history has also played an important part. You can sometimes say that in Alberta we don't have a lot of history, but what history we have is pretty important history, and it's pretty amazing history.

To go back to the Calgary Stampede and to realize that in 1912 a man by the name of Guy Weadick wanted a genuine contest – he didn't want the Wild West Show. He wanted a contest that would test the true skills of the cowboys and show their skill and their horsemanship, so this event was started in 1912. It sounds hard to believe, but 40,000 spectators showed up every day over the course of a six-day event. Now, that was at a time when we had even fewer people than we have: 40,000 a day showing up every day for six days.

The second Calgary Stampede was held in 1919, at the end of World War I. You've got all of those veterans coming back from the war. We needed something to remind us. Sure, they're coming back, and they're just glad to be home, and they want to partake in the culture of this province. Ernie Richardson was a manager of the Calgary Exhibition, and he started the undertaking and putting together the second Stampede. He spoke to some pretty famous people in Alberta history: Patrick Burns and George Lane and A.E. Cross and Archibald McLean. They were called the Big Four of rodeo. For those of you that are history teachers, you'll know that that goes back to the Big Four and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. You just see that this parade – you know, they had the rodeo parade, and it was exactly what the city needed at the time, and it speaks to some of the history that we have in rodeo.

And I know because one of my endearing memories is sitting down with a great-aunt, Minnie Mallory. She was deaf, and she had a hard time conversing and speaking with people, but we would spend afternoons together. She would drag out one of her photo albums, and in one of those photo albums were pictures of the Calgary Stampede from 1919 and 1920 and 1921. I'm not sure that anyone has those pictures. I know I've got them; they're in my basement. But I'm not sure too many people have ever seen pictures of the rodeo from that era.

When I look at my family life and growing up: born in, you know, lived most of my life in the city, but the CFR in Edmonton was something we didn't miss. It was an event that we went to almost religiously. Even to this day my mom and dad have to go around, in their 70s and 80s, and they have to hit all of the rodeos in Alberta. I don't know how many people know this, but the CFR, when it was started, in 1974 – they've used and stored the same dirt and reused it every year as a part of their history and a part of their tradition.

Well, we know that it's just a typical Alberta thing, and it's a part of where I live. It's a part of Drayton Valley. It's a part of my

constituency, whether we're talking the Haymaker Rodeo in Thorsby or the Buck Lake Stampede or the Drayton Valley Pro Rodeo. The kids that I taught: some have gone on to compete in the Calgary Stampede. So it's with a great deal of pleasure that I stand up today to remind us of a part of our culture, rodeo in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House and speak in favour of Motion 502. The motion moves that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agricultural events. I have the privilege of representing both rural and urban constituencies. Rodeo is appreciated by Albertans from all walks of life.

Rodeo has a history in Alberta before it even became a province. The first major rodeo opening was in 1902 in Raymond, Alberta. In 1912 the first Calgary Stampede was held, but its roots date back to 1886, and agriculture has remained the heart of the Stampede since its earliest days. Agriculture has been an important part of the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede from the very beginning. Now known as the greatest outdoor show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, between 1912 and 2015, had over 67 million people take in the festivities. Of the total Stampede visitors, 66 per cent of them will take in the agrizone during their visits. The event to this day still has a strong commitment to the rural communities and is a reflection of the important role agriculture plays in Alberta's economy.

Madam Speaker, I chose to live and raise my family in a rural community. I'm proud of the hard-working men and women that earn their livelihood in the agriculture industry, men and women that care about their communities and give back in so many ways. Every year it seems that many ag producers are under question, some may say attack, for the perception of how their animals are treated by outsiders not involved in the industry on a day-to-day basis. I want it to be known that treating animals with respect and care is an important part of how western heritage and values are celebrated. The producers I know take a disciplined approach to animal care and accept the responsibility of the welfare of animals. Their relationship with their animals is far more than just about money. They live and work with and are around these animals every day and have a high degree of respect and appreciation for their livestock. There are strict rules and regulations in place around animal welfare, and the producers pledge to continue their enforcement.

**5:40**

The importance of rodeo to Alberta has been raised by Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly before. In 2008, when speaking about rodeo, MLA Taft declared, "No other sport carries such a deep connection to our province's land and [wildlife], and that connection has played a huge role in Alberta's economic growth and cultural development." Over the years the crowds and the prize money have grown, but the events remain rooted in Alberta's history, values, and community spirit.

Each of the rodeos across the province is made great by the men and women who give their time to ensure the events are a success. Many of these volunteers come from our rural agricultural societies. The Stampede, for example, has started and remained a volunteer-driven organization, with 130 volunteers in the 1920s to today, where there are over 2,500 people volunteering their time to make this event a success.

The Calgary Stampede is known as the greatest outdoor show on Earth but is by no means the only one or the only Alberta rodeo event. In my riding I'm proud to talk about the Two Hills rodeo association, the Hairy Hill Rodeo, the Lamont Summer Sizzler Rodeo, the Vegreville fair, and also the Bruce Stampede, which is not in my riding but in the riding in Camrose. They are amongst many Alberta rodeo and agricultural events that are the heart and soul of the community. These events often include rodeo but also include agrifood, chuckwagons, horse shows, livestock competitions, and the celebration of western agricultural heritage, exhibits, and western events. These events give children and adults alike a chance to showcase their skills and hard work and to remember these proud traditions from the past. Through these events rodeo helps preserve our culture and the history of the west.

In my own riding I want to acknowledge the Carter family and the Dubuc family, who are well known as chuckwagon racers and are actively carrying on the tradition of Alberta chuckwagon racing at rodeos.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 8(3), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would now invite the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright to close debate on Motion 502.

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the members of the Assembly for the support they've shown Alberta's great tradition of rodeo and associated agricultural events. What's interesting is that when people start talking about it, you get into family, you get into history, and it's about relationships. It just came out, and you can see that.

The Rainmaker Rodeo in St. Albert: I think it earned that name over a number of years.

I really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford bringing in the indigenous contribution to this as well, and I appreciate him doing that. You know, it's because it's through mutual enjoyment of a sport that we get through and breach some cultural divides that may be there. I'm open to suggestions on how we can support rodeo and agricultural events, and I hope we can do that.

I know that when rodeo begins to hold regular events in the wake of this pandemic, the members of that community – and I've heard from many of them – which in a way are all Albertans, will appreciate the kind words spoken by both sides today. I really appreciate the support that we've seen.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 4

### Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020

[Debated adjourned May 28: Mr. Sabir speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 4? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for letting me rise and speak to Bill 4, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020. As we are in second reading, it will be something, you know, as generic as possible, so I will focus on the fact that we recognize that the government would like to have a fixed budget period.

You know, there are benefits and pros and cons on both sides about whether or not that's something that benefits the government, benefits the opposition, or benefits Albertans. When we look at Bill 4 and the fact that with a set budget date, we've seen historically across the different jurisdictions that it works for some, but we've also seen that it doesn't always necessarily benefit the government, so I find it interesting that they want to have a fixed budget period. But, you know, we know what happens. They, this government, as we've seen, in many ways tend to just push off responsibility and put it onto basically everybody else but the Executive Council when it comes to creating panels, looking at: if we do a panel for this, then they do the recommendations, and we can say, "Well, those were their recommendations; therefore the government is just following recommendations."

We've seen this with the MacKinnon panel. We've seen this with the economic diversification panel. We see this with – what other panels have we got? We've got quite a few panels. It just appears that, you know, we will just have the government continue to set up organizations and panels so that they can appoint people that align with their values and who can then basically write recommendations or try to follow through on different things just so that it validates what they were already planning to do. We've seen this, and we've seen this being used as an example of how to create a budget with the MacKinnon panel and being able to create cuts and being able to look at a variety of different things without the government really having to take any responsibility for the decisions that they're making.

It also limits the ability for people who may have different views or different opinions from being represented. You know, we've been looking at these different panels that have been set up, again, the MacKinnon panel and other different panels. One of the things that we've started to notice and identify is that the representation on these panels and how it specifically relates to making sure that when budgets are being created or different things are being created, the whole spectrum of the diversity of the province is represented: that isn't necessarily always there. I mean, we look across all the panels that have been created, and we see I think it's five women, on average, that are on some of those panels. It's less than half women on the majority of the panels.

You know, when you look at a fixed budget period and you look at fiscal planning and you look at transparency, you have these questions around: well, if 50 per cent of the population isn't represented and if we're looking at diversity and the fact that the diversity and the ethnic diversity of the province isn't always necessarily represented on these panels, how is it that it's addressing every single thing that Albertans need?

Again, with this fiscal planning and transparency amendment act, it does give a fixed budget. Sure, it gives a period of time, but it doesn't give a fixed date. It just gives an overview of a time. The government could choose in an election period to say: well, this is the fixed period of time, so we're going to call the election at the beginning of that fixed period and introduce a budget because we can say that we've done all these great things and that it looks really good. Or they could decide to call the election at the beginning of that date and say: we're not going to do the budget because it's only a budget period. Therefore, whoever happens to be the governing body after this, the party that wins the election, will have to deal with the budget.

It's sort of like what we saw in 2015 when Premier Prentice decided to put out a budget early. It was what he would have said was like a look-in-the-mirror moment, didn't resonate with Albertans, part of the reason why maybe the election didn't go the way that the current government would have liked it to have gone. There's a way to play around with this budget period, which could

have political benefits for the governing party and/or could put a new government in a situation where they're already being set up to fail. Although it will be sold to Albertans as "We're trying to be open, we're trying to be transparent, and we're providing these fixed dates," the reality of it is that it very much can be used as a political tool to manipulate elections as we move forward. I find that disingenuous. I don't find that transparent. I don't actually believe that it really is about fiscal planning and transparency. I mean, we've seen that there can be ways to look at these different budget periods that can be used to the benefit of the governing parties, and I think that there needs to be some honesty there about whether or not that's true because as far as I've seen, I mean, we've seen that in other jurisdictions, where that can happen. You know, there's that piece as well.

5:50

Again, going back to the fact that, you know – I'll back up a bit, I think, maybe. I'll just take my time. How much time do I have? I've got, like, 10 minutes?

**Member Irwin:** Just under nine minutes.

**Ms Sweet:** Oh. We've got nine minutes. Thanks.

I mean, again, I think that I really struggle with why this is being introduced now, why this is part of this government's priorities, I guess you could say, in regard to the platform commitments that this government made. We haven't really heard a lot in regard to the importance of this versus the fact that, again, we're currently in the process of dealing with a pandemic, an economic emergency, where we're seeing lots of other issues needing to be addressed around how we get this province back on track, how we're looking at revenue streams, how we are looking at supporting Albertans who have been unemployed, who have job losses, all these things. And Bill 4 is budget periods, fixing budget periods. I think that it would be more beneficial to Albertans to see a government who's actually introducing legislation in this House that addresses where we are today.

I recognize that the government made some choices around some of these bills prior to COVID. I totally appreciate that. I recognize that, you know, that is the case. But the fact that we have a couple of other bills that have been introduced in the last week and the fact that Bill 4 is the one that got pulled Monday, 10 minutes or 15 minutes toward 6, to see if we would stand up and be able to get it out of second reading I find interesting.

I think Albertans at this point want to see this government with a jobs plan. I think right now they would like to see maybe even a fiscal analysis done around how we're going to get out of what's happening with COVID-19. I think that Albertans right now want to know that they can access their health care and that it's going to be paid for and that their doctors are going to be there for them during COVID-19. I think that there are questions around fiscal planning and transparency when it comes to how much money is going to be invested in public education versus the Choice in Education Act and if there's going to be money shifted from one to another. I think that Albertans are wondering about housing and how they're going to pay their rent, how they're going to pay their business rent with corporations, how they're going to pay their staff, how they're going to put food on the table, how they're going to pay their electric bills, how they're going to pay for basically day-to-day living right now, and today we are standing here talking about a fixed budget period.

I don't think you're addressing the issues around COVID-19. On the priority of the things the government should be debating in this House and being creative about creating legislation that will

actually address the issues that Albertans are worried about, I think a fixed budget period, that will somehow be used to benefit in the next election, is probably not on the priority list. It's not. I don't think they honestly are worried about it right now.

What I would love to see this government do is maybe look at some of the other bills that they could be introducing, which we're waiting to see, that actually address the economic crisis in the province, that address job creation, that look at diversification, that recognize that we have a huge revenue problem with oil right now, that look at the fact that we need to get Albertans working, that we have a huge youth unemployment rate in this province, and that youth are looking for help. They're going to have higher tuition next year because of the postsecondary tuition cap being lifted.

There are a variety of other fiscal planning and transparency mechanisms that could be used, that could be discussed in this House, that I think would actually meet the needs of Albertans, and that have absolutely nothing to do with a fixed budget period. Again, I would like to hear from the government as to why they're feeling that this is the priority today and why this agenda is being put as a top priority and why they're not listening to Albertans, why they don't have any legislation currently on the Order Paper that actually addresses Albertans' needs right now, which is job creation.

I mean, we see lots of different things on the Order Paper, and apparently there are more coming, none that are actually addressing job creation in the province or diversification. Actually, looking at the title of the bill, fiscal planning and transparency, I see no fiscal planning in any of this legislation or how it's going to create revenue or how we're going to look at diversifying the economy or how we're going to create more jobs or how we're going to deal with the debt. Like, none of that is in any of the government bills that have currently been introduced in the House. In fact, there's really nothing on the Order Paper that addresses any of the things that I just brought up. Where is the economic plan? Like, I'm curious. I mean, you're talking about fiscal planning and transparency. You want to have a fixed budget period, but you have nothing in any of your future legislation and/or plans to address fiscal planning or, really, to talk about transparency and how you're going to explain this to Albertans.

I think that, you know, again, when you create a whole bunch of panels and you put a whole bunch of people on them that have the same ideological view as you do and you don't look at diversifying those voices and you have 50 per cent of the population being women yet you don't have 50 per cent of the population being represented on any of these panels, you're actually not being open and transparent. When you're not being open and transparent with Albertans, your bill doesn't make any sense unless it's open and transparent about the fact that you have an ideological view that you're just going to create your budget on and it's not going to actually help Albertans. As of right now, in the last year and a half we actually haven't seen any direct supports for Albertans.

We've seen lots of corporate handouts. We've seen the government party taking federal dollars to pay their own bills, but we haven't seen this government do anything to actually help Albertans pay theirs. I don't think that that's great fiscal planning. I don't think that that's transparent with Albertans. I think what that is is a government that has made a decision to push forward on an agenda that prior to COVID maybe made sense to some Albertans but doesn't make any sense now and isn't addressing the needs of Albertans and, in fact, is eroding what Albertans really need right now and then making it worse. We're not seeing supports the way we should be seeing supports at a time when Albertans really need them.

I'm sure many of the members in this House will have been hearing from their constituents saying: I can't pay my bills; my AISH has changed; I can't pay my rent; I'm going to lose my business; I can't pay my staff; all of those things. Yet there is nothing here, except to have a fixed budget period, that addresses any of that for Albertans. That's why we're here. We have a responsibility to take care of Albertans and to stand up for Albertans, yet we're not seeing that happening.

In fact, the voices that represent Albertans, the opposition's voices, are being silenced. [interjection] You can laugh. I think that's great. I think it's great when the government laughs at the opposition and doesn't believe that we actually have a right to stand up for Albertans and have their voices heard, because I know they're talking to me. I'm sure that the minister over there who thinks that's hilarious really isn't listening to his constituents if he really believes that the opposition isn't standing up for them. I can tell you right now that I'm hearing from a lot of people who voted for the UCP. They did, but they're not doing it again. They've made that pretty clear. They're reaching out, and they're talking to us. There's a reason for that, and that's because you haven't done anything to address the economic issues in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for about one minute. Any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. McIver:** Sorry.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. McIver:** Pardon me. We have a minute left to debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I just noticed that the length of this bill is such that it could be written on the back of an envelope, and it appears to have taken about that much time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt you.

The clock now strikes 6. This House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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