



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 11, 2020

Day 30

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
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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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Carson
Deol
Ganley
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Renaud
Turton
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Getson
Loewen
Rehn
Rosin
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Singh
Smith
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 11, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

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 prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Please be seated.

Members' Statements

Pride Flag Raising on the Legislature Grounds

Ms Renaud: When I approach the Federal Building and I see the pride flag on the side of the building, I am proud. I'm proud to be part of the team that chose to celebrate pride for the whole month and not just a 24-hour photo op. That's why I was so honoured to be able to join the community of St. Albert for the raising of their pride flag at city hall. The mayor of St. Albert noted that the flag would be up for more than 24 hours. I would encourage the members opposite to observe and follow this example next year.

The minister of culture also joined the flag raising and told the crowd that pride should not be political, Mr. Speaker, but pride is and has always been political. The UCP politicized pride when they raised and lowered the flag at the Legislature in under 24 hours, the same flag that flew for the entire month under our government. This government politicized pride when they became the first government in Canadian history to roll back gay rights. The associate minister of natural gas, whom I was glad to see attend, said it shouldn't be about bragging about who has a bigger flag. I agree. It's not about who has a bigger flag; it's about who flies the flag when the cameras aren't rolling and there are no crowds. I'm excited to know that when people come to the Legislature, they see the pride flag. Flying the flag is important, Mr. Speaker, but taking real and meaningful actions are even more important, and the UCP is failing on both counts.

Thank you.

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

Philippine Independence Day

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to celebrate Philippine Independence Day. Alberta is home to roughly 200,000 people of Filipino origin, and for many of them today marks an important day in their history. On this day 122 years ago the Philippines became independent of the hundreds of years of Spanish rule.

We're lucky in Alberta to be home to so many wonderful people of Filipino origin and descent, a people whose work ethic, community spirit, and faithfulness are truly admirable. They have done so much to build the success and resilience of our province.

Filipino immigrants bring to our province a rich heritage, which is a strong thread in Alberta's ever-changing cultural fabric. Although we are home to a diverse collection of people, one commonality connects us all: an unshakeable belief in the dignity and ability of free individuals. The Filipino community totally

embodies this ideal through hard work, sacrifice, and a strong sense of personal faith.

The Filipino community in this province never ceases working towards making our province a better place. Thank you to the thousands of people in the Filipino community whose hard work, volunteering, charitable giving, faithfulness have made the province what it is today.

The volunteerism of the community has been absolutely essential in the province as we combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Filipino organizations have been at the forefront of the effort to support our province's most vulnerable.

I believe every member of this House can join me in extending warm gratitude to the hard work of the Filipino community. May today be a joyful celebration of Philippine Independence Day for the many members of the Filipino community across the province.

Thank you and Mabuhay.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Child Care Consultation

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise in the House today and speak to the new consultation process that I will be leading on behalf of the Ministry of Children's Services. The Child Care Licensing Act is due to expire in early 2021, and our government is committed to ensuring Albertans have their say in developing the new regulations and legislation. These consultations will provide us with important feedback on what high-quality child care looks like to Albertans, with a focus on accessibility, affordability for those who need it most, and safety through regulations. Through suggestions for red tape reduction we'll ensure that child care operators can reduce overhead and spend less time on paperwork and more time with kids and families. Child care operators and industry associations will be invited to participate in virtual table-talk sessions throughout June and an online survey will be available to all Albertans beginning next week.

As a mother of three I know there's nothing more precious than our children. Most of my work was completed from home when my children were young, but I remember multiple times arranging for child care at critical times in our business cycle, such as their fiscal year end. It was a lot of juggling and a tremendous decision to leave my little ones in the care of someone else.

My primary concern as a mother has always been and will always be the safety and well-being of my children, as I know it is for any parent, so it's important for me to hear from both parents and providers to make child care regulation in Alberta the strongest to support families and ensure our children have opportunities to thrive in care.

As a business owner I know how frustrating it can be to come up against senseless redundancies and regulations which only serve to waste valuable time and resources, time and resources, Mr. Speaker, which could have been dedicated to serving, in this case, our children and families. That is why, as we move into the legislative review, we are preparing by listening to the feedback from those who know the industry best, parents and providers. We want to make sure that the new legislation for this sector is informed by those who use it every day.

I'm excited to start engaging with these key stakeholders and look forward to a thoughtful review conducted with the well-being of Alberta's children at the centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier's Adviser's Travel Expenses

Ms Phillips: David Knight Legg, the Premier's so-called principal adviser, was in the news again, billing Albertans for even more luxury. Albertans might recall this particular crony for billing taxpayers over 45 grand's worth of luxury travel to London. Now it's more: \$58,000 in luxury travel expenses in six months. This time, us Albertans, who've all seen our income tax and fees go up by over a billion dollars in the UCP budget, are paying for Knight Legg to stay in hotels with "marble bathrooms and opulent bedding." Sure must be nice to be a sycophant of this Premier.

Most Albertans could never afford this, and now, as the Premier raises income taxes on every Albertan while jacking up every single user fee that he can find, there's definitely no way folks could afford what UCP insiders spend on booking themselves a Manhattan hotel with a marble bathroom. Outrageous. Nearly 60 grand spent on luxury travel for one political insider while 300,000 people lose their jobs. Folks are struggling to get by, wondering how they'll get through this recession, while the UCP makes a bad situation worse. The Premier has been threatening what he calls a fiscal reckoning, using the recession that he has made worse as an excuse to make life harder for all of us. But there's no reckoning for his friends or the partisan hacks that he's taking all Canadians' tax dollars to pay for.

You know, David Knight Legg is well known in my constituency – he grew up in Lethbridge – but he is a long way from the Sandman Hotel on Mayor Magrath now, Mr. Speaker. This Premier needs to give taxpayers back the money his UCP took from us. David Knight Legg needs to give taxpayers back a least a portion of these luxury expenses for trips that Albertans haven't even seen an itinerary for. Was he undertaking any of his own private business on our dime? We don't know. We deserve better. To the UCP and to D.K.L.: give us our money back.

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

Flora Weiss

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was Seniors' Week, and I was impressed with the support our government showed for seniors. Alberta values its seniors greatly in my constituency, and my constituents are no exception, as seniors contribute so much to our communities.

One of those individuals who contributed greatly to her community was Mrs. Flora Weiss. I had a chance to meet Mrs. Weiss and spend time with her at her home in an Onoway lodge. She was sharp as a tack, had a sparkle in her eyes, and always was a pleasure to be around. The word on the street was that you should never play cards with her for nickels or you would be left penniless. Even at the age of 103 she still cooked her own meals, taught the high school kids how to bake bread, and looked after the flower garden at the lodge, which they aptly called Flora's garden.

Flora was here in the House last year. I was going to read her statement as a token of honour, but, unfortunately, my statement wasn't read due to scheduling, and she passed away during day surgery later that fall before I could have her back. I'd like to take this time to honour Flora as I promised I would.

Flora Weiss was the first-born to Alex and Lena Kennedy on June 29, 1916, in a log cabin near Sangudo. Her parents were born and raised in Nova Scotia, but they quickly relocated to Edmonton for opportunity. The family went on to build a log cabin which they called home for some time. In 1941 Flora married Frank Weiss. His family was half a mile from her. It was there that they lived and had and raised their three children. Flora and Frank were deeply

involved in local organizations in the community: the historical society, the Royal Purple, and the Elks, just to name a few. Shortly after Frank's death in 2010, Flora broke her leg on the farm and made a difficult decision to come live at the Chateau Lac Ste. Anne in Onoway. While it was not necessarily where she wanted to be, she committed to having a positive attitude. Flora's positivity and the ability to tackle all of her life's challenges was a testament to her resourcefulness. When I asked her what her secret was to longevity, Mr. Speaker, she said, simply: stay positive.

Thank you to Flora and all of our seniors. You're truly the glue that holds us together.

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

1:40

Adoption Services

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month 90 potential adoptive families were devastatingly sidelined by the news that their adoption agency, Adoption by Choice, was suddenly closing. Having already invested tens of thousands of dollars into the process over the course of years, these families have lost that money and are now going to be at the back of the line at one of the three remaining adoption agencies in Alberta. While these agencies are independent contractors, they're licensed by the government, and under the adoptions regulation the ministry is required to get annual financial statements and has the authority to investigate and revoke licences. If Adoption by Choice was in a precarious and unstable financial situation, the ministry should have been aware and perhaps could have done something about it.

The minister has publicly committed to following up with the remaining adoption agencies to ensure there's a smooth transition of files. But so far these parents have heard nothing and, after years of waiting, will be pushed to the back of the line with another agency. Many of them have told me that this is now the end of their adoption journey. They can't afford to start again with a new agency or go through the heartbreaking years of waiting once again. That is why I'm writing to the minister to get answers for what happened, so we can learn from it and prevent it from happening again.

As part of her response to my letter, I hope the minister also clarifies her expectations for the recruitment and assessment policies which regulate adoption agencies in Alberta. It's critical that Albertans of all backgrounds, faiths, sexual and gender orientations have equal access to adoption services in Alberta. I also hope the minister will clarify how she will help these families directly affected by the sudden closure of Adoption by Choice.

Becoming an adoptive parent is already a difficult journey. It's filled with highs and lows, joys and sorrows. Unfortunately, the journey for these parents has become unnecessarily filled with sadness and pain, and for some it means their journey has now ended. These families deserve answers, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the minister will provide them.

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

Victims of Crime Working Group

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to recognize the establishment of the Victims of Crime Working Group, that I will serve as co-chair with my colleague the hon. Member for Grande Prairie. The Victims of Crime Working Group will closely review the model for the victims assistance program, which will replace the financial benefits program. This group will also examine what aspects of the current service delivery model will work well, where there are gaps, and provide suggestions for solutions. We will be working with a wide range of stakeholders to

update the service delivery model to better address the needs of victims in Alberta. The feedback received by this group will help to ensure that the victims of crime fund has the best possible capability to support victims.

Mr. Speaker, from day 1 our government has said that we will do everything we can to protect Albertans and keep our communities safe. This is exactly the opposite of what the NDP did when they were in government. Despite the scathing report from the Auditor General in 2016, it took the NDP until just prior to an election to release a very small portion of funds to a very select group of recipients. It is interesting to hear the opposition fearmonger over Bill 16, as we have increased fines in this province and then, therefore, increased revenues for the fund, allowing us to expand the scope by supporting more preventative measures, thus reducing the amount of actual victims in the first place and all while maintaining funding levels to organizations serving victims in our province. Our government has actually taken action to reduce crime, unlike the NDP.

Again, unlike the NDP, we are actually committed to supporting victims in this province. Mr. Speaker, we must ensure that victims of crime in Alberta have the support that they need as they navigate the most difficult and challenging times in their lives. I'm happy to be part of the solution as co-chair of the Victims of Crime Working Group and bring attention to public safety and crime prevention. I'm so grateful for the work being done in my constituency of Airdrie-East, even though they were overlooked when the NDP finally got around to giving out additional funds at an interesting time, before an election.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

School and Playground Construction

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our educational institutions help lay the foundation upon which the future leaders of our province will build. The communities of my constituency have grown rapidly over the years, dramatically outpacing the necessary school infrastructure.

I'm happy to report that five new schools are now in various stages of construction to meet this demand. These include the long overdue Auburn Bay middle school, Auburn Bay second elementary school, Cranston second elementary school, Mahogany elementary school, and St. John Catholic school, which is also an elementary school. As you may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, my constituency is full of young families and a multitude of children.

In addition to the record funding of over \$8 billion allocated to K to 12 education this year, these schools speak to our government's commitment to strong and accessible public education. Currently Alberta Education provides up to \$250,000 per eligible school to support the construction of a playground. I'm happy to report that each of the upcoming elementary schools in my constituency is receiving this funding.

On June 2 the Minister of Education announced an additional \$5 million to help construct 26 play structures that had previously been planned but not funded. Prior to this, the development of these 26 playgrounds relied solely upon independent fundraising efforts from school communities and parent associations. Playgrounds contribute to the physical and social development of our children and enrich the communities in which they are located. I would like to thank the Minister of Education on behalf of my constituents in Calgary-South East, especially the multitudes of children – thank you – and I look forward to seeing children in my constituency benefit from these schools and playgrounds.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Business Innovation and Government Policies

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the world's most successful inventors was prolific inventor and commercialization businessperson Thomas Edison. Edison lived and invented in the later 1800s and early 1900s. This era's innovation and invention successes were outstanding, perhaps second to no other era. The developments in electricity, automobiles, airplanes, manufacturing, telephones, and photography speak for themselves.

Edison knew, perhaps intuitively but more likely through many years of trial and error, that layers and layers of rules and regulation were stifling innovation. In fact, one of his many famous quotes addresses the need to unhinge positive creativity. Mr. Speaker, he said, "There are no rules here – we're trying to accomplish something," and accomplish they did. Where would we be if Edison had been stopped from creating his hallmark inventions by endless red tape?

Contrast this with today's world: pipelines have been cancelled or heavily subsidized by taxpayer funds after billion-dollar delays; investments forgone or placed elsewhere because permits either take too long or cost too much; and the burden of taxation makes a return on capital very uncertain. Business is driven by profit; however, there is only profit if there is a need or demand in the market for it from consumers. The entire process of meeting market demand brings investment dollars for economies by creating jobs in research and development, manufacturing, sales, and much, much more.

As we work to come out of the economic lockdown brought on by COVID-19, staying true to the principles of free enterprise remains vital to our economic success. Governments do have a small role to play in the economy such as ensuring a level playing field for businesses to operate and ensuring fair rules for all employees. Even so, governments need to be sure to get out of the way of progress, ensure that the tax burden is minimal, and maintain the economic environment to allow modern-day Edisons to be free to innovate and create.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 22

Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020.

Bill 22 comes at a time when Albertans need assurance about our support for the economy. Like all red tape reduction initiatives, this bill works to make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in the world. In total, it recommends 14 legislative changes across six ministries. All the changes can be placed into four categories: expediting government approvals, reducing the administrative burden on municipalities, enhancing government transparency and eliminating outdated requirements, and promoting job creation and economic growth by eliminating unnecessary burdens on Albertans and businesses.

These legislative changes represent another major step forward in reducing the regulatory burden placed on Albertans and businesses by one-third. We have already reduced red tape by 5 per cent in our first year of this government's mandate. Mr. Speaker, as we work to reopen Alberta, we must ensure that our job creators have the utmost support from government. They are the ones who will get Albertans back to work, and in many cases the best support we as

government can offer is to get out of their way. That's the core purpose of red tape reduction, and I believe Bill 22 demonstrates it.

I look forward to providing more detail on the proposed legislation in the coming days. I hereby move first reading of Bill 22, the Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

1:50 Oral Question Period

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

Tobacco Product Flavouring and Nicotine Content

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While this government is proposing rules for vaping in Alberta, their legislation will do nothing to address the real problem of addiction. This is on purpose. The Premier caved to his friends in the big tobacco lobby, giving them exactly what they wanted: no flavour ban, no limit on nicotine. This goes against all the evidence of Alberta Health Services and senior health officials, including our chief medical officer of health. To the Premier: why is he taking the advice of his former campaign manager, turned tobacco lobbyist, over the advice of Dr. Hinshaw?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the review that was led by MLA Nixon and our initiative to regulate vaping, which the NDP had four years to do and failed. The proposed amendments include the power to regulate flavours, and we'll use it as needed, starting by aligning vaping regulation with tobacco. We believe that this will be effective based on the success that we've had historically with smoking. It's true: we're not doing everything that the NDP could have done in their four years, just most of it.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health will know that no matter how proud or disappointed he is with another member, there is no reason to use his name here in the Chamber.

The hon. Official Opposition leader.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's former campaign manager, his party's former executive director, their former fundraising chair: they're all at the Premier's door. The list of lobbyists working for big tobacco reads like a VIP guest list for a UCP hospitality suite. Alberta Health Services says, quote: the tobacco industry has a documented history of seeking to deliver high concentrations of nicotine. End quote. Looks like that worked. Premier, when will you stop listening to your friends and start protecting the health of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The review was open to all stakeholders, including the tobacco industry, and we designed an open process which respected the guidelines of the WHO on interaction with the industry. Meeting notes are posted on the website, including details of all those who attended. The suggestion of the NDP of undue influence is just plain politics.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's the thing. Numerous health officials, including the chief medical officer of health, leading us through this pandemic, told them to do more. The public agrees. The government's own survey showed that 66 per cent of Albertans

support banning flavours. So Albertans want it, health officials want it, Dr. Hinshaw wants it, but the only people these guys are listening to are their friends and insiders. Who suffers? Young people developing addictions. Why won't this Premier put their health ahead of the private profiteering of friends and insiders?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's use of Dr. Hinshaw's reputation for their own political purposes is just the saddest political stunt, especially considering the amount of times they've attacked her advice during the pandemic.

The chief MOHs from all provinces signed a public statement in January which endorses measures to protect our youth. The statement said that flavours and nicotine content would be best addressed federally. Those are the words that were used in that statement. In other words, the provinces should consider further measures if the federal government doesn't act, which is exactly what I announced and our government's commitment to Albertans.

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. But many provinces have acted anyway.

School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

Ms Notley: Now, for many kids, returning to school this fall will be difficult. They will be behind, and they will need extra help. And we'll need to keep them safe. School boards have to fundamentally rethink how our classrooms will work. Yet this minister is asking them to do triple the planning with no new resources, no new funding, and no guidance until at least August. To the Premier. You keep bragging about the size of your pandemic response, but there's nothing for schools; in fact, you cut them. Why are kids always at the bottom of the Premier's priority list?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Every school authority is receiving an increase in their funding for the upcoming school year, and they are expected to work within their budget. But I am very happy to say that we were able to announce yesterday a very comprehensive re-entry plan which allows students to return to school while continuing to protect the health and safety of our staff and students.

Thank you.

Ms Notley: Well, the Premier slashed per-student funding, and he knows it. Let me walk the Premier through the problem he's created. This fall more kids will walk into schools. There will be fewer teachers and support staff and bigger class sizes. That's because of his budget. Now, because of the pandemic, schools will need more custodial services, more classroom space but, with smaller class sizes, more teachers. You don't need elementary math to know this doesn't add up, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is setting up school boards, teachers, and, most importantly, our kids for failure. Why?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have worked very closely with school boards, with the College of Alberta School Superintendents, with the ATA, with the parent groups to ensure that we have a very strong re-entry plan, and that's exactly what we presented to the public yesterday. We will continue to work with school authorities in the coming months to ensure that we have everything necessary to make it a successful re-entry. We have

developed what I believe to be a very comprehensive education re-entry plan. We're very proud of it, and we are looking forward to welcoming our students back in September.

Ms Notley: Well, her plan has created stress and questions and nothing else.

By not properly funding enrolment, this Premier is forcing school boards to fire teachers and raise school fees. This week in Edmonton alone we've lost 178 teachers and 429 educational assistants, leaving thousands of special-needs students without support. This Premier's deep cuts to education will be felt long after the pandemic. It will last a generation. He thinks it's okay to pocket taxpayers' dollars for his own political party, but he's happy to sacrifice the future of our children. Why, Mr. Speaker? Why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have always been committed to providing a world-class, high-quality education for our children, and that starts with more money getting to the classroom. In fact, under our new funding model that's exactly what's happening. As I said yesterday, the Edmonton public school division last year received \$1.017 billion; this year they will be receiving \$1.031 billion. I have many quotes that I could read from other school divisions that have endorsed the new funding model, and I look forward to sharing those with you in the days to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

Ms Hoffman: I'm proud of how students, staff, and families have stepped up to get through these tough times, made even tougher by the UCP, who've laid off more than 20,000 education staff and are doubling down on their cuts, forcing even more layoffs at a time when Albertans need more support, Mr. Speaker, not less. Yesterday I was very disappointed to hear that no new resources would be available to help schools relaunch. Premier, you might have said that the minister misspoke. I'll give you an opportunity: will you commit to providing new resources to help schools bring students back safely?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reiterate what the plan is for the upcoming year. School authorities will be planning for three scenarios for September. The first is that in-school classes resume near-normal operations with health measures; the second is that in-school classes partially resume with additional health measures; and at-home learning is the third scenario, where in-school classes are cancelled. Of course, our preferred option is that most likely we will be in scenario 1. I'm very happy to say that. I know parents are looking forward to that, where students will be able to return to their daily classes with near-normal operations.

Ms Hoffman: To quote the minister: school divisions have within their budget the ability to allocate funds and resources to address these needs. End quote. But the translation is that the province won't provide a single nickel to help schools relaunch. The minister will force every taxpayer to cough up additional money to support her partisan hacks at UCP headquarters, but no money for kids. Schools need extra cleaning supplies, they need PPE, they need more staff to keep each other safe, and this government is cutting their budgets. Will the Premier at the very least commit to paying for PPE for schools that need them to keep kids safe?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue to share the information that this re-entry plan was made in consultation, very close consultation, over weeks and weeks with all of our education partners. We have been working with them, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that they have what they need to have a successful re-entry plan.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: That's a big old no, Mr. Speaker.

And she's not giving any additional support to ensure that kids and staff are safe. Yesterday the minister left more questions unanswered than answered. She couldn't answer the questions about PPE, physical distancing, cleaning, all things that parents and staff have said are critical before the relaunch. Since this minister is continuing her cuts, we are seeing more job losses at a time when teachers are telling us that they're stressed, overwhelmed, and need more help. More than 600 fewer workers in Edmonton public schools alone, and this minister says that there's no problem. Will the Premier finally listen to the concerns of Albertans, step up, and provide answers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is very disappointing to see members opposite critiquing the expert advice of Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw. We have developed a very comprehensive education re-entry plan, which allows students to return to school while continuing to protect the health and safety of our staff and students. The health and safety of our staff and students is the number one priority, it will always be the number one priority, and we are working with school divisions and all of our education partners to ensure that that continues.

Premier's Adviser's Travel Expenses Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy

Ms Phillips: The fiscal reckoning the UCP is threatening has taken an interesting turn. It's going to definitely affect businesses, families, doctors, patients, but one group is surprisingly unaffected, the Premier's inner circle. His principal adviser, who's already caused one scandal with luxury hotel expenses, just handed us another bill, for more than 58 grand in luxury expenses. Before we get more UCP lectures about a fiscal reckoning, could the Finance minister start by reining in David Knight Legg's luxury expenses?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, we make no apology for reaching out to the global investment community to attract investment into this province. That is something the members opposite failed to do when they were in government. That is not a mistake we will make. It's rich to be lectured on travel costs by the members opposite. Back in 2017 the then Premier, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, a minister, and six staff spent \$10,000 in five nights. We will not be lectured on costs.

Ms Hoffman: He spent five times that on one night.

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Hoffman: Sorry.

The Speaker: I think that you must be.

Ms Phillips: “Custom furnishings, pristine marble bathrooms and opulent bedding, our guest rooms and suites are immersive escapes high above Manhattan.” Uncompromising indulgence with luxury amenities but no itinerary or accountability, Mr. Speaker. This Finance minister raised everyone’s income tax, property tax, gouged everyone with new fees. Why is the Finance minister hiking up all of our taxes and fees to pay for David Knight Legg to sleep in opulent bedding and sit atop a marble throne?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, there has not been a government, I believe, in the history of this province that raised taxes like the members opposite did when they were in office. They brought in the carbon tax, which was the largest single tax increase on Albertans in its history. They did it without any permission; they didn’t campaign on it. The members opposite are the kings and queens of raising taxes in this province.

Ms Phillips: Well, now that carbon tax is going to Ottawa, and it’s coming back to Albertans in the form of a subsidy for UCP partisan hacks, Mr. Speaker. This is a Finance minister who also thinks taxpayers should pay for his party fundraising hacks, exploiting a program that was supposed to help struggling business. We get higher taxes and fiscal reckoning; the UCP cronies get the good life. Will the Premier give back the money he took from Canadian taxpayers and order David Knight Legg to repay his luxury travel bills?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, we make no apology for having an expert in international investment banking out there seeking to attract investment back into the province, investment that the members opposite chased out by the billions as they raised taxes on Alberta businesses, as they added red tape and regulatory burden. We will not make that mistake. We will deliver for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Child Care Centre Reopening

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Premier announced that phase 2 of relaunch can begin tomorrow, a week ahead of schedule. This is great news for so many Albertans who have made sacrifices to stop the spread of COVID-19 and are now eager to relaunch our economy. We know that child care centres and preschools have been hit hard by the public health emergency and the mandated closures. To the Minister of Children’s Services: how are you going to ensure that this sector is restarting, financially viable, and able to support parents to get back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As a working mom of two young children I know how incredibly important child care is for working parents across this province. I want this sector to succeed and to thrive, and I am working to support that. Our government is providing \$19 million in sector-specific support to ensure parents have safe and affordable options for their children. This supports centres to offset around 25 per cent of costs that were not covered by other support packages, purchasing sanitation and cleaning supplies, and funding recruitment of both families and staff. Child care centres asked for this, and we’re happy to support them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the Premier announced this week that stage 2 is slated to begin

tomorrow and given that daycares, out of school care, family day homes, and preschools have indicated they’re grateful for this funding but that the mandated cohort size has proven challenging for their business models and further given that many working parents rely on such programs and services for child care so that they can return to work, to the same minister: what does this actually mean for the child care sector and for working parents?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We heard similar feedback from the sector, and we’ve been working very closely with the chief medical officer of health on incorporating that feedback. We’ve heard from the reopened centres, and we are updating the health and safety guidelines for those centres to operate. Centres will now be able to operate in cohorts of 30, up from the previous number of 10, and centres that operate in large open spaces will also now be able to divide their spaces out since the requirement for floor-to-ceiling drywall dividers has been removed. We’ll continue to listen to these centre operators.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that an accelerated relaunch is welcome news for many Albertans eager to get back to work and given that child care operators across the province are looking forward to resuming their operations and further given that there are tough times still ahead for our economy and that women in particular have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, to the same minister: what are your plans to ensure the long-term sustainability of our child care sector to support children, families, and in particular working moms as Alberta opens up? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely believe that child care is a hugely important piece of our economic recovery, and supporting women to return to work is important to this government. Albertans need and deserve a child care system that is equitable, accessible, high-quality, and affordable for those who need it most while also preserving and respecting parent choice. We’re working with the federal government to ensure that funding goes to those who need it most, not those who are in the right place at the right time. I’m also grateful to the Member for Grande Prairie, who is taking on this important work of leading these consultations on our Child Care Licensing Act.

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

Mask Distribution

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the government’s plan to distribute nonmedical masks to Albertans using drive-through restaurants was unorthodox, but when it was announced, indeed the concept looked reasonable. Since then Albertans have raised several serious questions about how the plan has been executed. First off, constituents and others have been asking me why these masks are being packed into bags of four in the backrooms of drive-through restaurants. If this is a public health initiative, why were these masks not packed into bags of four by government before being distributed to restaurants?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to highlight and bring attention to this initiative. It's an initiative where, I think, Alberta is the first and only province to distribute masks province-wide to folks, and we're very happy to have been able to partner with A&W, McDonald's Canada, and Tim Hortons to be able to distribute. In each box are about 2,000 of these masks, and depending on the direction of each of these restaurant chains, they directed a certain number of boxes, between 16 and maybe about 30, to each of these restaurants for them to assist in the distribution as well as the packaging of these masks, packaging four at a time so they can be distributed to Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: We'll see, Mr. Speaker, if we can get an actual answer. Given that we have seen widespread reports of restaurants giving out far more masks per visit than the minister planned for, sometimes up to 10 times more, and given that these are drive-through, so it's not a question of people taking too many – they are being given too many – what has this government done to fix this problem, to address actual distribution, and how many additional masks may they actually need to buy, then, in order to make up for a possible shortage?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

2:10

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two tranches of distribution. The first is this first 20 million. The next 20 million will be later on, perhaps in the beginning weeks of July. To date, since June 8, I think a total of 2.125 million masks out of that first 20 million have been distributed by those restaurants. I'd also note that they're not the only ones distributing the masks. We have 44 municipalities, we have 46 First Nations, we have seven Métis settlements, we have 14 seniors' organizations, we have 38 women's shelters, we have 24 homeless shelters, and we have street outreach programs that are also helping us distribute these to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that with this distribution program we have no idea how many are actually getting to what number of individual Albertans and given that it's clear that these drive-throughs and their staff were not properly prepared or trained to take on the task of distributing public safety equipment and given that Alberta taxpayers paid for these masks and have a right to know why they are not being distributed properly, will the government table the agreements it signed with these drive-through restaurants so Albertans can judge for themselves why this plan has stumbled?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, these partner organizations, including the 44 municipalities, the 46 First Nations, the seven Métis settlements, et cetera, all of these partners, are helping us distribute at their own cost. We are not paying them. We are spending \$350,000, though, for the gap distribution for folks who don't have access. Not every Albertan is within 10 kilometres, for example, of one of these drive-throughs. Not every Albertan has access to being able to get to a drive-through. For that gap distribution and partnering with municipalities, partnering with seniors' organizations, homeless shelters, long-term care facilities, foster care, that gap distribution is going to be . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Automobile Insurance Premiums

Mr. Carson: When in government, our caucus took steps to protect consumers from skyrocketing insurance costs by capping insurance rates. This government pulled the rug out from under Albertans by lifting this cap, letting rates climb by up to 30 per cent. Their response to Albertans paying huge increases has been to appoint yet another panel to study the issue and report back. I'm hoping that today the minister can please confirm when his panel will report back and on what date he will make his report public. We're waiting.

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're a government that believes in being informed prior to making great policy decisions that affect Albertans, unlike the members opposite. We are expecting the report from the panel in the upcoming days. They are working to finalize that report. We're looking forward to the report. Auto insurance is a very complex area. We've worked to understand the cost drivers that are creating the increase in premiums for Albertans. We are about providing a solution.

Mr. Carson: Given that when first presented with these huge jumps in insurance premiums, the minister's only action was to tell Albertans to, quote, shop around and given that this minister's failure to act has meant that during the global pandemic and economic crisis Albertans have been paying more at a time when many can't afford to and given that this minister will proudly defend the use of Canadian tax dollars to subsidize his debt-ridden party office while refusing to lift a finger to help struggling consumers, does this minister have anything other than empty words to offer Albertans coping with insurance rate hikes?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we are acting when the members opposite failed to act. They brought in a Band-Aid fix that made a bad situation worse with a rate cap. It resulted in less consumer choice for Albertans. Many were denied collision, comprehensive coverage. Many were even denied access to coverage. Because a rate cap is simply a Band-Aid on a bad situation, we will not repeat that error. We will find substantive solutions for Albertans.

Mr. Carson: Well, given that this minister made a decision to hurt the pocketbooks of Albertans without any plan – and it's been almost a year now – and given that the UCP seems satisfied as long as the Premier got his reduction in his premiums and given that many of those Albertans who drive themselves and their families have not seen the relief that the Premier bragged about and given that the Minister of Finance can't offer a single solitary example of anything he's doing to support these Albertans, will the Minister of Finance restore the cap and give relief to those struggling as a result of insurance rate hikes, or is he calling it mission accomplished now that the Premier saved his \$200?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this government is in fact taking action. That's why we have implemented a panel to issue a report that will provide recommendations on a sustainable fix for automobile insurance premiums for Albertans. The members opposite didn't

have the courage to deal with this issue when they were in government. We will deal with this issue. We will provide a solution for Albertans for their automobile insurance premiums.

Provincial Parks, Campgrounds, and Protected Areas

Mr. Loewen: This spring concerns have come up in my constituency about the status of campgrounds in provincial parks. With camping season upon us, many of my constituents would like to continue to use the sites at Running Lake, Sulphur Lake, Stony Lake, and others. These beautiful locations in the north have produced countless fond memories for Alberta families. We know that these sites will not be closed to public access, contrary to the misinformation spread by the always angry NDP. We also know that local partnerships can be found to operate them. To the minister: are you willing to work with local municipalities and community groups to operate these parks for the community, and if so, when will those details come forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yes. Mr. Speaker, first of all, parks are not for sale. I appreciate the hon. member pointing that out. And none of those facilities are closed, despite what the NDP has said.

Yes, this government is interested in working with nonprofit organizations. That's what we ran on in our campaign, and we've been doing that inside this province for a very, very long time. It's unfortunate that the NDP have never respected the nonprofit and conservation organizations that have partnered with my department and with the national parks service inside this province, including right in our backyard, yours and mine, Mr. Speaker. The Friends of the Eastern Slopes for decades have worked to protect one of the most beautiful places in the world, the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch.

Mr. Loewen: Given that Albertans expect fiscal responsibility in the delivery of government services and given that partnerships between local communities, nonprofits, and the municipalities are a cost-effective way to keep campgrounds open and available to all Albertans, and since the NDP anger machine across the aisle has misled Albertans, that parks will be sold and closed off to public use, can the minister clear the air again for us in this Legislature and for the residents of the Peace Country about the situation with the selling of provincial parks that the NDP accused you of?

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It's an important question. It is disappointing to see the angry NDP continue to misrepresent facts inside this Chamber and elsewhere. To answer that question, I will refer you to their environment critic, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and his quotes right here in this Chamber just the other day, on June 9. He said: "I just want to clarify, though, one thing that the member said about the fact that parks aren't for sale. I just want to say that I agree with the Minister of Transportation when he says that parks aren't for sale." So there you go. Those are the facts as presented by the opposition critic.

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

Mr. Loewen: Given that this government is dedicated to the well-being of our parks, public lands, and our environment and given that the angry NDP's attempt to suggest otherwise finds them grasping at straws and playing fast and loose with the truth and

seeing that this government wishes to ensure that Albertans have access to public lands, will the minister commit to responsible conservation of sensitive areas and that any funds spent on habitat and land protection will be done with Alberta organizations like the Alberta Fish and Game Association and the Alberta Conservation Association and others that value not only the conservation but also reasonable access to protected lands for Albertans?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We are one hundred per cent dedicated to that, unlike the NDP who, when they were in power, went to our communities with foreign-funded organizations, trying to sterilize the land for both economic and recreational development, including right in my very own backyard outside of Rocky Mountain House and Sundre where they tried to stop us from having access to our backyard. This government will always make sure that Albertans have access to their wild places, and we're not ashamed to partner with them to be able to manage the beautiful places that they have managed already for decades inside our province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Environmental Monitoring and Reporting

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A dozen conservation and indigenous groups in Alberta have written to the federal environment minister asking him to reinstate the environmental monitoring that Alberta unilaterally suspended without consultation. These groups include the Fort Chipewyan Métis local 125, Smith's Landing First Nation, and Mikisew Cree. To the minister: did your office get a call from these groups first, and why are these First Nations and Métis communities asking the federal government to do your job?

2:20

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the Alberta Energy Regulator is responsible for this issue. They're independent from government, and they've been clear on what is taking place when it comes to this important issue. As we have brought up in this House before, the AER under this government is not a corrupt organization like it was under the NDP government. That member was part of that government who oversaw an organization that was called out by every legislative officer of this Chamber, including the Auditor General, who is looking for 2.4 million missing dollars. Does that member know where the \$2.4 million is?

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that starting tomorrow people will be able to go to movie theatres, swim in public pools, and go to casinos and given that First Nations groups have said that they need deadlines, not vague ideas, on when the monitoring will resume, can the minister tell the House when he plans to restore this critical monitoring? Will it be this week? Next month? Next year?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Again, Mr. Speaker, the AER is an organization independent of government, but 98 per cent of monitoring remains in the province of Alberta. There have been slight changes to be able to accommodate staff during the COVID situation, and that will adjust as we reopen.

Again I see the hon. member is avoiding the question. He was a cabinet minister in charge of an AER who was described by the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner as corrupt and that

they're looking for \$2.3 million. Does that member know where the \$2.3 million is? Does that member know where the \$2.3 million is? Does that member know where the \$2.3 million is? Let's talk about what's going on with the \$2.3 million.

Mr. Feehan: You can ignore First Nations at your peril. Given that earlier this week three different First Nations – the Mikisew Cree First Nation, the Fort McKay First Nation, and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation – are appealing the regulator's decision to suspend monitoring and given that despite the decision's impact on their treaty rights the First Nations were not consulted, can the minister explain to this House and to those nations why his government continues to suspend the monitoring without any clear rationale linking it to public health emergency and safety?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Alberta government has not suspended any monitoring. The Alberta government has provided some leeway in reporting to be able to provide some extensions during the COVID situation. The hon. member is referring to the Alberta Energy Regulator, who is independent of this government, though I am very proud that the Minister of Energy and myself were able to fire the AER that worked for that hon. member.

Again, \$2.3 million went missing under his watch of the Alberta Energy Regulator. I'm just trying to help the Auditor General. Does he know where the \$2.3 million is? Because the Auditor General would be interested. Maybe some of his colleagues do. I don't know. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Education Funding and Enrolment

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the ongoing public health emergency, almost all colleges and universities across Alberta are proceeding with online classes for this fall semester. However, due to deep operating cuts handed down by this UCP government, postsecondary institutions like the U of A and the University of Calgary have said that they must hand down the same rate of tuition, raised by 7 per cent in the last UCP budget, to the Zoom University. Can the Minister of Advanced Education please explain why he's forcing postsecondary students to pay more for online education?

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

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that question is quite simply that we're not forcing anybody to do anything, of course. As the member opposite hopefully knows, our postsecondary institutions are independent in their decision-making. It's important for this government to not interject and interfere as to how those institutions make their operational decisions. It's our job as government to give them the tools and resources that they need to continue their operations. I know that our postsecondary institutions are making prudent decisions as we head into the fall to ensure that our students remain safe. I believe moving to online is a very safe and prudent decision.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean, given that postsecondary institutions had their budget cut by this government, thus forcing them to increase tuition, and given that students will also be paying more for their education due to cuts and reduced program choices as well – American sign language classes having to be cut at the U of A; Lakeland College lost five trades programs. I'm sure the

minister has calculated how many students won't even be able to enrol this fall because of tuition hikes, program cuts, and online classes. How many fewer students does this minister expect will come? Eight per cent? Ten per cent? Fifteen per cent?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we do know is that under the former government the actions that they took did nothing to increase enrolment in our postsecondary institutions. You'll forgive me if I don't take lessons from those members when it comes to expanding access and enrolment in our postsecondary institutions. As well, let's continue to look at their record. Despite increases in funding, postsecondary participation remained flat over the years that those members were in government. That is why we are working with our institutions to come up with innovative ways to drive enrolment, including ambitious plans at the U of A to increase enrolment by 25 per cent.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that other Conservative governments in other provinces have reversed their deep cuts to the sector and have chosen to invest in colleges and universities and given that other governments have also committed to providing emergency financial assistance to students, freezing or reducing tuition given the emergency that we're in – I know that this minister is capable of reversing bad ideas. I've seen him do it a couple of times this past week. How about giving students a break on tuition at least while they must be taking classes on Zoom or Skype or other online platforms?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I leave the decision, when it comes to tuition, to our individual institutions. It's important for them to make those operational decisions.

The member opposite wants to talk about investment into postsecondary education. I'm very proud to talk about the investment of over \$11 million to Careers: the Next Generation to quadruple the number of students who participate in apprenticeship programming as well as \$10 million to Women Building Futures to help more women pursue apprenticeship learning. We believe those are important postsecondary pathways, Mr. Speaker, and we will indeed deliver a stronger postsecondary system.

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

Airlines

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 has had a disastrous and what may be an enduring impact on the airline industry. WestJet furloughed half its staff and is losing up to \$25 million per day. Air Canada lost over \$1 billion this past quarter. Considering that the airline industry is a significant employer and contributor to GDP in Alberta, to the Minister of Transportation: what supports are available from both provincial and federal governments to get them through what is arguably a game-changing crisis?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's airline industry – the member is right – was hit hard by COVID-19. That's why I was pleased to see the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek introduce Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. This bill will build on Alberta's rich aviation history and make recommendations to secure regional, national, and international air services. We look forward to learning through this process what more we can do to make sure that our airlines are successful now and into the future, because it's a key part of economic development and success for Alberta.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many airlines have significantly reduced passenger capacity, some by over 90 per cent, while still being responsible for billions of dollars of assets and fixed costs and given that many consumers are uneasy about the health considerations around air travel as well as uncertain with respect to government restrictions on passenger acceptance, to the same minister: how is our government working with the federal authorities to ensure that we can keep our airlines viable as a truly essential service in a modern global world during these challenging times?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we're actually going above and beyond. We're actually kind of doing the federal government's job for them to a certain degree. Our Premier went to an airport early on in the COVID crisis and found that there wasn't adequate screening, there wasn't adequate advice on sheltering and those types of things. So we've actually along the way put Alberta Health people there to give information to travellers coming in about the obligations to shelter for 14 days when they're coming from another country and advice on keeping socially distanced, washing their hands, and other things. We've actually gone above and beyond to do the federal government's job for them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the importance of both local and international airlines in providing choice, convenience in fares, routes, and frequency and given that the decimation of passenger traffic and the likelihood of a complete rethink of operations will further challenge financial sustainability within the sector, again to the minister: what is our government doing to help Alberta-based or -operating carriers to relaunch vital air services given the well over 100 destinations served from Alberta pre COVID-19?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of our advances that we are doing to maintenance and stuff includes the STIP program, which, amongst other things, helps small retail airports, offers them an opportunity to do some improvements to their individual regional airports. We're also working to make sure to create an overall business-friendly atmosphere, because as airports are important to the economic development of Alberta, the economic development of Alberta is important to airports. We're trying to work both ends because they are together.

2:30 Coal Mining in Clearwater County

Mr. Schmidt: The town of Nordegg has a proud coal mining history, but today, in the 21st century, Clearwater county describes it as, quote, Alberta's fastest growing mountain resort community. The Nordegg area includes some of Alberta's finest hiking trails, which attract tourists from all over the world, but the minister of the environment seems to have other plans for the area. Why did he quietly change the rules to allow open-pit coal mining at some of Clearwater county's best outdoor tourism sites?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, because you come from Nordegg, Nordegg has a proud history of coal mining, and Nordegg is a great and beautiful community that has balanced economic growth at the same time as environmental protection for

decades. Environmental protection rules remain in place. There is no coal mine approved, as the hon. member is referring to, but there is a process in place at the Alberta Energy Regulator to make sure all environmental rules are followed before any mine would be approved. That there is the big difference between us and that party. We are dedicated to protecting the environment, but we're not ashamed of companies that create jobs in our communities.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the minister is on record as saying that he would not make any land-use decisions outside of the North Saskatchewan regional plan and given that his move from outdoor tourism to open-pit coal mining is a substantial change in land use, did the minister consult with outdoor recreation employers or municipalities or anyone other than coal industry lobbyists before he quietly announced these new rules on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we have not made any land-use decisions when it comes to the area. This is typical of the NDP, who mislead on things like parks or environmental decisions. The reality is that no land-use decisions have been made in this regard for the area around Nordegg, but there is a process in place for that conversation to take place through the Alberta Energy Regulator. All environmental rules will continue to remain in place. Let me be clear. Our government believes we can find balance between protecting the environment and creating jobs, and I will not ever be ashamed of standing up for employers in my community that will put my people to work for multiple generations. That's the difference between us and the NDP, who were going to let our towns die.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that the minister means Australian companies employing coal miners and nobody else and given that Robin Campbell, president of the Coal Association of Canada, says that the industry is quite pleased that at least half a dozen coal mines are now allowed where they were previously prohibited and given that some members of this cabinet have belatedly realized that tourism is actually a crucial component of any economic diversification plan, will the minister give us a straight answer about whether he believes the future of the eastern slopes is in outdoor tourism, or is it in open-pit coal mining?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the future of this province is in many different industries, including tourism and, yes, metallurgical coal, which creates the steel that we depend on across this world. This again is the difference between us and the NDP. You just saw it there with the NDP. They want to attack an employer that may come to our province and invest capital from Australia to create jobs for the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and elsewhere inside this province. That hon. member wants to attack them. No wonder underneath his government billions of dollars fled this province. I want to assure you and all Albertans that Alberta is open for business. We'll protect our environment, and we'll put our people back to work.

Seniors' Issues

Ms Sigurdson: Last May the Minister of Seniors and Housing acknowledged that Alberta's seniors population will grow from 13 per cent to 19 per cent of Alberta's population by 2035. The minister made a commitment to work closely with stakeholders to ensure "that seniors' concerns are heard." To the minister: given the growing distrust with private care homes and their response to COVID-19, what consultations do you have planned with seniors and their families to ensure that you do hear their concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing is rising.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that very important question. So far we held three town halls with over 1,000 individuals or organizations and exchanged information to make sure we get updated information and tailor different kinds of solutions that meet their needs. On top of that, my team has been working closely with all the leaders of the organizations and making sure that they provide all the updated information and fix all the problems right away.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the minister recognized that 4,800 senior households are on the wait-list to access nearly 25,000 senior housing units in Alberta and given that the majority of these facilities are in desperate need of renovation, repairs, and upgrades, to the minister: since May of last year, what changes have been made to directly address this concern?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work closely with our housing partners to ensure that safe and maintained housing units are available for Albertans with low income. This will allow us to make the best use of capital maintenance and renewal dollars. We have to make sure of the way to make Albertans' affordable housing system more sustainable for future generations.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that that's a whole bunch of nothing, given that when asked by the Member for Calgary-East in this House, "When will Alberta seniors' concerns be addressed?" the minister said that the work is already under way and given that many months passed before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted senior Albertans, and given that the minister has made a commitment to meeting with seniors in Alberta, to the minister again: please update the Assembly on exactly what work has been done and when we can expect to see the seniors' action plan, which was promised last year.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, again, we continue to have contact with organizations and in town halls, and we allocated \$13 million of FCSS funding for our seniors organizations to make sure that we provide the support to all the seniors' homes, lodges, and long-term care. Also, it's very important that well-being and health are most important to this government, and they are my first priority. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has the call.

Economic Relaunch Stage 2 and Physical Activity

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of weeks I've been contacted by a number of parents from across my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain about the need to get children outside and active again. While the reopening of playgrounds in my riding was a great first step, many parents are still waiting for announcements from our government on when more options will be available. To the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: what steps has our government already taken to relax conditions around areas that encourage Albertans to be active?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you most of all to Albertans who have made it absolutely possible to be successful and to actually move into stage 2. On June 4 we were honoured to participate with over 2,000 members of the sport and fitness community, and actually they were absolutely imperative in helping us create the documents that will come forward to make sure we can get our munchkins out and playing as safely and as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we all understand the need for Albertans to be regularly active and given that many parents are looking forward to the reopening of areas like rinks, gyms, and indoor facilities and given that these areas have not yet been reopened by our government, to the Minister of Health: what additional options can parents expect to have when our government enters stage 2 of our relaunch strategy tomorrow in order to keep their children active and healthy?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indoor rec, fitness, and sports, including gyms, pools, and arenas, originally planned for stage 3 have been moved forward to reopen in stage 2. All these activities must comply with Alberta's public health guidelines, including physical distancing and frequent cleaning. We've posted specific guidelines. They're online at alberta.ca/bizconnect – biz with a "z" – for indoor rec, but it's on all Albertans to apply these.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of my residents have asked about when their children can resume playing organized sports and given that organized sports can provide a huge opportunity for youth to remain active, providing routine and structure to exercise, and given that our government just announced organized sports will also be allowed to begin on Friday, can the minister talk about what issues impacted the decision to allow organized sports to resume, and what restrictions will continue in order to ensure the return of sports will not endanger the province's COVID-19 response?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to echo what the Minister of Health said, that the gyms and facilities were actually part of stage 3, but because of the great work of Albertans we've been able to move that up to stage 2. They'll be able to open their doors tomorrow and comply with the guidelines. I actually am happy to table the guidelines today on the return to physical activity. Again, I'd like to thank Albertans from the bottom of all of our hearts for being able to move forward so quickly. Thank you for very much for the opportunity.

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

2:40 Economic Relaunch Stage 2 and Horse Racing

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The horse-racing industry is one of the oldest professional sports in Alberta, since 1882. With over 200 races a year now the industry draws thousands of spectators and broadcasts across North America. This year, like many others, they were hit hard by COVID-19 shutdowns. As we are entering phase 2 of our relaunch strategy and as other provinces such as Manitoba

and Ontario have begun to allow the horse-racing industry to start, to the Minister of Finance: when will Alberta follow the lead of other provinces and allow horse races in Alberta?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been working closely with the industry over the past month to really understand the challenges that this sector has been experiencing and the innovation that they can bring to safely restart their industry. I'm pleased to say that horse racing in Alberta can resume their operations in stage 2 this Friday. We were very pleased to announce that, and we were very pleased to work together with the industry to find solutions.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Minister. The industry will thank you as well. Given that all professional sports have been hit hard by the COVID-19 regulations and given that just recently Ontario and Manitoba have announced that they are allowing competitions and races to take place again without fans and given that Alberta racing organizations have submitted protocols with social distancing, staff practices, online fan participation, and it's outdoors, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: when the horse-racing industry returns, what health protocols will they be expected to follow?

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 the question. As part of the announcement of stage 2 of our relaunch we have developed guidelines for horse and motor racing and have posted them on Biz Connect. Some of the protocols for racing include a maximum number of spectators of 100, provided that two metres of distancing between parties can be maintained, races scheduled with enough time for areas to be disinfected, and others. We have also added guidelines for casinos and racing entertainment centres, which will require them to submit an operational plan to AGLC, and spacing around ticket kiosks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many individuals in the province of Alberta rely on the sport for their livelihood – farmers growing feed, the trainers, the breeders, jockeys, and all of the support staff at the race tracks – and given that since 2002 the sport is a net contributor of over \$265 million to the Alberta lottery fund and given that Horse Racing Alberta has already cancelled a lot of races and lost thousands of dollars of revenue, to the Minister of Finance: what supports are available to the horse-racing industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I mentioned, we've been working with the industry to understand their concerns and their challenges. This is an industry that contributes over \$300 million in economic activity to Alberta annually, and much of that is in rural Alberta. What I can say is that we are currently finalizing a financial assistance plan that will ensure the success of horse racing this summer and into the future.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the tablings of returns and reports.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone with a tabling? The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies to table of Return to Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation: Stage 2 for consideration. I deposit it in the basket?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. You can place it in the tablings box on the tablings table.

Are there any other tablings today? Are you standing for a tabling?

Mr. Nally: I'm standing, sir.

The Speaker: I might get you a phone book next time.

The hon. the associate minister of electricity.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the requisite copies of a letter that I sent to the mayor of St. Albert describing the inappropriate, divisive, and unprofessional conduct of the Member for St. Albert at a community event.

The Speaker: The only reason why I make comment of the phone book is because I am very familiar with the use of the phone book to make me just a little bit taller.

Are there any other tablings? It looks like the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has also risen.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings: one from The Track on 2, Racing Protocols and Racing under COVID-19, that they have put forward to be able to move forward; secondly, protocols and proposals for live standardbred racing in co-operation with the track as well as the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association. I have the requisite number of copies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a tabling, which is a tweet from the now Premier from January 2015 where he says, "You have a strange definition of democracy if it involves compelling people to finance political parties against their will" – I referred to this quote in a question I asked, I believe it was last week, actually – where, of course, the Premier is doing exactly that today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I would remind members that if a document has been tabled in this session, there isn't a requirement to table it again. I believe that document has been tabled previously. It's not a huge deal, just a point of context for everyone.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:18 the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised a point of order.

Point of Order

Imputing Falsehoods against a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar the point of order being raised was 23(h) and (i), makes allegations against another member, imputes false or unavowed motives to another member. At 2:18 the Government House Leader, while engaged in responding to friendly questions from his own government caucus, deliberately

attempted to mislead this House by imputing motives against the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in misquoting *Hansard* by deliberately taking a portion of a quote. I believe he was quoting from the June 9 *Hansard*.

To further my argument, I will read the full quote, which the Government House Leader did not choose to use. The full quote reads:

I just want to say that I agree with the Minister of Transportation when he says that parks aren't for sale, because technically they're not for sale . . . That is technically the truth. What is for sale is all of the facilities there and the land. So outside of the facilities and the land, nothing is for sale. You know, I will concede the point that only all of the facilities in our provincial parks and only all of the land that our provincial parks are on are for sale. I want to thank the member for making that important technical clarification.

By the Government House Leader choosing to use the smallest portion at the front, I think he is obviously going completely counter to the intent, the message, and the motives of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. As the Government House Leader, understanding how debate takes place in this House, for him to take a portion of that quote and attempt to tell Albertans that the member has said that parks are not for sale is not credulous. I think it's beneath the level of debate we should be striving for in this House, then, to twist someone else's words using only a partial quote.

Given previous rulings in this House and your serious concern around the use of whether someone is or is not misleading this House, to see this action taken by the Government House Leader to use a portion of a quote, when it is very clear that the intent from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was to clearly show that this government has put all of the facilities and all of the lands at these specific parks up for sale – it is under that 23(h) and (i) that we rise on this point of order. We ask that the Government House Leader apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, to be clear for the record, there is no land and/or parks for sale inside this province. Again, it's unfortunate to continue to see the misleading inside this Chamber and a little bit rich for the hon. member to accuse me or anybody else in this Chamber of misleading this House when her member and her caucus continue to mislead Albertans on a daily basis on this issue.

Having said that, this is clearly a matter of debate. No, I did not quote the entire member's speech into the record in a timed question in question period. I was asked by my hon. colleague in regard to parks being for sale and his concerns of the fact that the NDP continues to make things up in that regard. I used these exact words, from the hon. member on June 9, 2020, at 19:30, which are clearly in *Hansard*: "I just want to clarify, though, one thing that the member said about the fact that parks aren't for sale. I just want to say that I agree with the Minister of Transportation when he says that parks aren't for sale." Mr. Speaker, the question was about parks, and I referred to the hon. member's comments in regard to parks.

2:50

The Speaker: Thank you for both of your submissions. I would just provide a small caution to the hon. the Government House Leader. In referring to who or what organizations may or may not be misleading this House during his point of order, it sounded a lot to me like he may have said that this member and members of the NDP are misleading the House. The implication that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods would be misleading the House would certainly have been a point of order if it was made during any other time.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I'm happy to withdraw that.

The Speaker: I hear you say that you're happy to withdraw it. I'm happy to have that. I can only imagine that you just meant to refer to the opposition.

With respect to the substance of the point of order I do agree with the hon. the Government House Leader that this is a matter of debate and a continuation of the debate that did take place in the House on June 9, 2020. At any given time, members of both sides of the House will use portions of *Hansard* to prove a point or disprove a point, and I don't believe that there is any point of order, with the exception of the point that's already been withdrawn by the hon. Government House Leader. As such, I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Prior to moving to Orders of the Day, I would just like to mention to hon. members that earlier this afternoon my office sent out a memo that provided some context about the additional opening of our Legislature as we move into phase 2 of the Alberta government's relaunch. I provided some additional comments with respect to visitors. I encourage you to review that memo as there are a number of protocols there that you will be required to follow.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 4

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

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate . . .

The Chair: My apologies. Before you start, hon. member, I just want to remind the House that we are on amendment A1.

Mr. Shepherd: Of course, Madam Chair: amendment A1, proposing that indeed the bill move from a fixed budget period to a fixed budget date, that being set on the third Thursday of each February. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to amendment A1 on Bill 4, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020. Of course, though, we are debating an amendment which would perhaps suggest, then, that that would be a change to the title. Perhaps that's a further amendment we may need to bring later, depending on how members should receive this particular amendment. That would then become perhaps the fixed budget date amendment act. We will see how that may proceed.

Now, what we have in this particular bill, in which we are considering moving from a budget period to a budget date, is – the legislation currently establishes a range of 28 possible dates during which the budget could be set. Now, I would note that although this government very much likes to invoke the MacKinnon report in many of the decisions it's making that apply to other people, certainly, Madam Chair, in this particular case they seem to have decided that a particular recommendation of that panel should not apply to them. I'm sure there are many in the health care system

that would wish the government would give them the same latitude in considering how elements of that report would impact them.

But in this particular bill we see that the government is ignoring the recommendation of the MacKinnon report that it set a fixed budget date, as we see is done in the province of B.C. Indeed, on many occasions this government and members of it, indeed, ministers of it and, indeed, my own counterpart, the Minister of Health, have often praised decisions of the B.C. government to justify many of the steps that he has chosen to take or to misrepresent sometimes, I think, elements of what the B.C. government has done to justify things here. That aside, the B.C. government is one that has set a fixed budget date. Again, that was a recommendation of the MacKinnon panel report and one which this government has chosen to ignore by instead giving itself a range of 28 possible dates on which it could set a budget.

In that sense, one could say that this is somewhat weak legislation, so that is why we have this amendment in front of us here today, because we are always happy to try to be helpful in the Official Opposition, Madam Chair, to help the government to achieve the goals it has set out for itself. In this case, since it has said many times that the MacKinnon panel report is indeed the template for the work it needs to do and the work that is necessary to do on behalf of Albertans, we're more than happy in this instance to help them comply with that report more fully and set a precise, fixed budget date.

Now, of course, again, this amendment is proposing that that be the third Thursday of February. Now, of course, if the government would like to propose a different fixed budget date to comply with the MacKinnon report, certainly we could perhaps have a subamendment to this amendment, or we could have an opportunity for that discussion here, and we could take a look at that. At this point, what we are proposing is that we move forward with a fixed budget date of the third Thursday in February.

Now, certainly, this decision of the UCP is one that sort of falls amongst many that they've made of late. You know, the decision to exploit a federal loophole to take federal tax dollars to pay for their political staff: certainly, this decision to ignore that recommendation of the MacKinnon report is not quite as bad as that decision but is still a problematic one because, really, all this bill is doing is suggesting a budget window so that Albertans will know the month of the year when this government will continue its agenda of, well, I guess, moving forward the budget. Certainly, what we saw with this last budget was certainly not much in the way of transparency.

Now, certainly, it is a step towards transparency, I suppose, to offer a fixed budget window, much as we have a fixed election window. That's better, I suppose, but indeed what we saw even with this last budget is that this government did not want any scrutiny or transparency around its budget. While we consider having a fixed budget date or a fixed budget window, I think it's worth recognizing that this government, in fact, chose to use extraordinary powers of this House to force their budget through in a record amount of time, they said, under cover of the COVID pandemic, but indeed they were more than happy to proceed, then, with several nonessential pieces nearly immediately afterwards. That's certainly concerning because whether we have a budget window or we have a fixed budget date, which is what we are discussing right now here on this amendment, such behaviour by a government certainly indicates that regardless of – even if we do manage to fix that date, I think Albertans will still have good reason to be very concerned about this government's commitment towards transparency.

Now, certainly, I look forward to the upcoming fiscal update which we will see from the Minister of Finance. Of course, generally with those fiscal updates: those take place within a period of time. To the best of my knowledge they don't have fixed dates,

but they are required, I believe, by a certain point. I look forward to that and certainly look forward to the government, hopefully, being far more transparent about the path. They are currently rocketing along towards \$20 billion of debt, indeed, a far higher deficit than our government ever saw.

But recognizing that, of course, there were important steps they needed to protect Alberta against COVID-19 and, of course, this government choosing to force through the budget which we are talking about here, whether or not in the future such a budget would take place on a fixed budget date or whether it would take place within a fixed period, a period of 28 days so that such a budget, as in this case, that was forced through and really did not take into account the very real fiscal realities that we know this government was staring down and indeed being based on what they themselves knew were absolutely, utterly gutted projections, utterly unrealistic, indeed the Minister of Finance noted that he felt Rome was burning down around him when he brought it forward in February.

3:00

Of course, in this case we had not yet had legislation like this which would allow us to consider whether we should be, as under the amendment, on a fixed budget date or budget window, so the minister had the opportunity to decide when he would bring forward this budget, which then almost immediately became irrelevant and this government then chose not to bother updating but instead to ramrod through this House with barely any scrutiny, cancelling even opportunities they already had in place to proceed with the estimates.

Now, of course, this bill, that we have in front of us – to set either a fixed budget window or, as we are suggesting with amendment A1, which is in front of us, to have a fixed budget date would not amend such behaviour by government. Certainly, government under this bill would still be free to abuse the power that it has, to force the opposition into a position where we barely have an opportunity to debate. They could still do that under this bill or under this amendment moving towards a fixed budget date. They could still choose to absolutely limit and gut the estimates process that Albertans rely on to give the opposition the opportunity to do their job on behalf of Albertans, which would still take place, government allowing, under a budget window or a fixed budget date. Unfortunately, the government is still allowing themselves that power to move in such a way that is, I think, an embarrassment to Albertans and falls far short of the standards Albertans expect governments to keep, whether or not they were working with a budget window or, as in amendment A1, as we're discussing here, a fixed budget date.

When we are talking about a bill that is indeed entitled the Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020, and while we are considering whether that should incorporate a budget window or, as in amendment A1, a fixed budget date, I think it's incredibly important to consider just in what ways government is choosing or not choosing to in fact be demonstrating good fiscal planning or indeed transparency. My concern is that I don't understand why this particular element of the MacKinnon report, which, again, has served as, for lack of a better metaphor at the moment, the bible of the UCP's plan so far, of this government's intentions for the province of Alberta – why this one particular piece?

They are more than happy to use that document to put all kinds of constraints on every other part of Alberta, Madam Chair. They have been more than happy to quote that document to attack doctors in our province. Indeed, just the other day the Minister of Health had a good deal to say about how he was going to ensure transparency from the Alberta Medical Association and how important it was that

Albertans know precisely what every doctor in this province is being paid, yet that minister is part of a government which has tried to duck transparency and indeed in this bill is choosing to ignore the recommendation from their own panel on financial prudence in this province, that being in having a budget window of 28 days as opposed to what we are proposing here in amendment A1, that being a fixed budget date, the third Thursday of each February.

Again, this is a government that is more than happy to enforce all kinds of stringencies on other folks within this province, as much as they may talk about autonomy and freedom, Madam Chair, and in this case want to allow themselves the freedom of 28 days as opposed to a fixed budget date, which we are proposing in amendment A1. They are more than happy to tell school boards what they should or should not do with their reserves. They are more than happy to tell municipalities what they should or should not do. They are more than happy to grasp and interfere and insinuate their way into every level of governance in this province, in the name of the MacKinnon report and sometimes just plain old ideology, in ways that they did not outline in their election platform and in ways that are not mentioned in the MacKinnon report and indeed in ways that I have heard no Albertan say that they have asked this government to behave.

But in this one instance where we have this recommendation clearly related to Bill 4 and the budget window of 28 days, which this government is proposing for itself and that we are suggesting should be amended to actually reflect what the report actually said to the government, that being a fixed budget date on the third Thursday of February each year – again, what we have seen continually, Madam Chair, unfortunately, whether or not there is a fixed date for the budget, is a government that is quite loose with the facts, shall we say, when it comes to how their budgets are actually operated.

Indeed, we have heard the repeated denials from the Minister of Education regarding the Education budget, which is part of what we are discussing here as we discuss whether or not we should have a 28-day budget window under which that Education budget would be brought forward as opposed to a fixed budget date, as we are proposing in amendment A1. That Education budget, of course, we continually hear, has no cuts in it, but we know the effects that it's having on the ground, that Education budget brought forward under a budget as it would be in the future within either a 28-day budget window in this bill or instead, as we are proposing under amendment A1, a fixed budget date. But what we have seen instead is a complex shell game attempting to hide from Albertans the depth of the cuts, which we continually hear from parents and are continuing to hear from parents and school boards and everyone else about, aside from members of this government, the minister, and her staff.

I can only imagine that under a future budget, which under this bill, if the government had its current way, would be within a 28-day budget window and which we are proposing, through amendment A1, should be a fixed budget date of the third Thursday in February, we are going to see more of the same. Given that it is the choice of this government to continually display this kind of bad faith to Albertans and, frankly, to every single organization so far which provides services to Albertans – and indeed we have seen the effect that it's having, I think, on the credibility of the government – you would think this could give one opportunity to make this one change, to perhaps show Albertans, give them a little more reason to maybe give a little bit of trust back to a government which has continually made cuts and then said that they did not make a cut, even though Albertans can clearly see the cut is there and your school board will tell you the cut is there and indeed your front-line

doctor will tell you that the cuts are there and, in fact, are affecting these services.

And as we see doctors leaving communities and we see patients having issues with being able to find a doctor, we know what the reality is despite what the government might say. Here is an opportunity for them to at least demonstrate that they will offer a little bit of good faith to Albertans by adopting a fixed budget date. That would be one thing that Albertans would know for sure they could trust that this government would do when they said they would do it, despite the fact that there have been so, so many elements on which they've discovered they cannot.

Indeed, the budget, coming either in a 28-day window, as proposed by the legislation, or, as we are proposing in amendment A1, on a fixed budget date, that being the third date – third February. Pardon me: third Thursday of February. Third February of Thursday, perhaps in an alternate universe.

But recognizing that this would provide that little bit of faith back to Albertans, indeed, perhaps Albertans like those who serve in our big cities, in Edmonton and Calgary, who saw the big-city charter, which this government had promised in their election campaign they would in fact keep but broke faith and tore up this past fall – indeed, in the first budget, which would not have been affected necessarily by this legislation as it fell outside of the 28-day window which this legislation would propose for a normal budget year, or, if the government were to adopt amendment A1, which we are currently bringing forward, which would move that to a fixed budget day, that being the third Thursday of February – of course, that budget in the fall, which eliminated the big-city charter, which the government campaigned on the fact that they were in fact going to keep and so were utterly disingenuous with Albertans and indeed our big cities on that: that particular budget would not have been affected by this legislation.

Now, we can look a little bit closer at it. We can sort of wonder: well, does this government actually, really have the intent of keeping good faith with Albertans in terms of its future fiscal plans or announcements or budgets? There's not really anything in this bill, not really any incentives or sanctions, to ensure that cabinet actually abides by either this range of dates which they currently propose in the bill, that being 28 days, or instead moves to a fixed budget date, that being, as we are proposing, the third Thursday of February.

3:10

To the best of my knowledge, there would be no specific penalties should the cabinet choose not to follow through on that. As I have discussed and certainly could continue to discuss at great length, Madam Chair, this cabinet has already demonstrated that it lacks good faith in many respects with Albertans. It's willing to take a number of gambles and a number of steps, including on many things that it promised it would not do and then has chosen to do. So Albertans have good reason to ask why such a government, when they have had such an experience with it already, thinks that they would be okay with simply saying: "Yeah. We'll trust you on that one."

I can tell you, Madam Chair, from the e-mails that I get in my inbox as the critic for Health, that there are very few people in this province that trust this government on health care right now. That's for sure. Certainly, in the ongoing battle we see between this government and doctors, far more Albertans seem to trust their family doctor than this government, whether or not the members of the government would choose to actually believe their family doctors and those in their communities.

Again, this is all part of our discussion of this bill, which the government has brought forward, which is intended to restore some

modicum of trust or provide some modicum of accountability on the part of government. Indeed, that's right there in the title: the fiscal planning and transparency amendment act.

We will see, I suppose, Madam Chair, first of all, whether the government chooses to accept the amendment that we have brought forward, amendment A1, proposing a fixed budget date as recommended by the MacKinnon panel, the panel which this government swears up and down all Albertans should accept as the blueprint for the future of our province regardless of how much pain they may feel as part of that process, how much inconvenience, how many services they may lose, how many teachers may be fired, how many doctors may be driven out of the province, how many educational assistants are not there, however many special-needs students are left without support, however many people on AISH are left with cuts or may be unable to access it, however many people are no longer able to access supportive housing after cuts by the government as part of their budget, which we are discussing, when that budget would come in here as part of either a 28-day window or the fixed date set out in amendment A1, being the third Thursday of February.

I suppose we will see if this decision by government to bring forward this one change, this one measure, will convince any more Albertans that they can have any trust in this government or indeed any budget that they bring forward as we have the Premier going about and talking about the great fiscal reckoning that is to come except, of course, for himself and, you know, Mr. Knight Legg in his office, who can enjoy the greatest of expenses.

But when the Premier brings forward a budget under this bill, whether it will be in that 28-day period or whether it will be, if they accept the amendment, on a fixed budget date, that being the third Thursday of February, that great fiscal reckoning that the Premier talks about, that would take place under the steps, under the rules set out by this bill, we will see if this government is in fact willing to take a small amount of inconvenience on its own part while it is so willing to foist so much more than inconvenience, indeed real pain and suffering, on Albertans and Albertan families as a result of their fiscal decisions. On this amendment I suppose we will see whether this government is willing to take . . .

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to respond to some of the concerns brought up by the member opposite from Edmonton centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Williams: Edmonton-City Centre. Pardon me. Thank you, hon. member.

He questions if there could be one thing that Albertans could know about the budget. Well, one thing Albertans do know is that they don't trust the NDP to run the budget. We saw that very clearly in the last election. The amendment put forward by the members opposite makes zero sense, Madam Chair. If we were to have, say, a pandemic during that third Thursday of February, what would happen? It seems like they're just throwing anything to the wall and hoping that it sticks.

I'm very glad and my constituents as well are glad that the members opposite are not governing during the pandemic right now because if they were we would end up in a spot, potentially, where we'd have no money to spend. This was the debate during the debate on the budget this last year. We were in a spot where we needed to spend dollars. We needed to be able to finance and fund our government programs. Had we done what the opposition

suggested, the province would've run ashore. We wouldn't have been able to get any money to any of our programs.

It makes no sense, Madam Chair. It sounds as though they're really just trying to be oppositional for oppositional's sake. I understand that there's an interest in that in Parliament and the Legislature, such as this, to find a certain amount of friction so that we can have good debates and produce better legislation, but I ask you and I ask members opposite and I ask my constituents: is this really making better legislation, where they're just spinning their tires to try and fix us into one single date, when there could be any number of disasters or circumstances yet thought of that bind us into a single fixed date for the budget rather than a period of 28 days? It seems eminently reasonable. Anyone I could speak to in my constituency would say: I see no idea why you'd pick one day for something like that when there's so much riding on it. Our entire government stops if that happens.

I appreciate very much how the members opposite care so deeply for social programs as do I and my constituents. It strikes me that the last thing they'd want is not to deliver those programs. It strikes me that the amendments they're bringing forward do exactly the opposite of everything they say publicly and criticize us for.

On that, I'm happy to take my seat and continue debate on the issue, but I'd implore members opposite to please go ahead and vote for this bill and against the amendment so that we can have a thoughtful way of approaching our budget going forward.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and colleagues, for the opportunity to engage on this matter for consideration today before the House. I do want to say that you can vote for an amendment and vote for a bill. Voting for an amendment certainly doesn't preclude anyone from being able to vote for a bill.

Let me take a trip down memory lane as to why this amendment is even being considered here today. One of the first things that the government did after they were duly elected was appoint Dr. MacKinnon to run a blue-ribbon panel report and come up with a number of recommendations. Recommendation 25 in her report, which the Premier proudly stood beside her when she released on September 3, 2019, not even a year ago, was "Establish a fixed budget date." Full stop. She didn't say "period." She didn't say "season." She didn't say "opportunity for several dates, 28 or even 29, once every four years." She said, "Establish a fixed budget date." Couldn't be more clear. Date. There's not a lot of room to read between those words to interpret what the member opposite has just said.

The rationale that the member opposite gives to having a date being: well, what if that date doesn't work because there's a global pandemic? The most recent global pandemic has lasted for longer than 28 days, but the government took the opportunity to ram through their budget on the eve of it. Their prerogative if they chose to do so, I guess, but to put in a law that gives you so much flexibility outside of the direction that was given through this report, that they say they're acting on implementing, around having a fixed budget date – not a period, not a season, not a month. Date.

I also want to remind us of our colleagues, then in the Wildrose, who were very opposed to having a campaign season, as it was referred to in the legislation. There was a proposal to have an election date, and the then Premier Redford came out with a bill that said that there would be a campaign season. It could be any one date within sort of a three-month period. The outcry, rightfully so, came from the members of the Wildrose for the Premier of the day to

ignore her own testament that there would be a date and then to later come forward with a season. I guess it isn't a three-month range; it is a 28-and-a-quarter-day range that is being proposed here by the government, but it is absolutely contrary to what the MacKinnon report recommended in recommendation 25 less than a year ago that they so proudly endorsed.

That's why my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West and the critic for Finance has moved the following amendment. I'm going to read it because, again, I know a lot of us are doing our best not to have too much paper on our desk. For everyone's reflection Bill 4, Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020, be amended in section 2 as follows, that the proposed section 4.1(1) be struck out where it says, "during the month of February" and substituting "On the third Thursday of the month of February." Very clearly a date; a date that moves. Thursdays are often used. That's a nice day. Often governments want to drop the budget and then be able to go around during a constituency break or at least during the constituency day and the weekend to be able to promote the budget.

3:20

We understand that. That's why we're suggesting that it be on a Thursday, which it often is on a Thursday, and we picked the third Thursday because it is a date, it doesn't seem like it's too early or too late, and again it complies with recommendation 25 in the report.

Striking out the proposed section 4.1(2) and substituting the following, so (2) instead would read:

If, for the purpose of holding a general election, the Legislative Assembly is dissolved at any time between August 31 and March 1 of a fiscal year, the responsible Minister shall, no later than 120 days . . . on which the general election is held, table in the Legislative Assembly the main estimates for the fiscal year that immediately follows that general election.

If there is a spring election during the time where this third Thursday falls, of course you don't stop the election. If the election is called during that period of time you have up to 120 days following that election to be able to present the budget. Again, not a hard date but 120 days following the third Thursday, so it certainly would give a lot of opportunity in those occasional years, according to the law right now.

Let's hope that law gets followed. It did get followed in the last election, but it wasn't followed in the previous elections even though it was brought in under Conservatives that if there is an election, it should be during that season, in the spring, once every four years. Presumably it would fall during the third Thursday of February once every four years. That's been taken into consideration in this amendment.

Why are we adding that second piece? Well, I will say that when we were in the briefing on budget day and this bill was brought to us, as has been past practice that bills be shared with the government – actually, I don't actually think it was the bill. I think it was a briefing note, not the actual bill. But the government and public service representatives share bills related to the budget with the opposition so that everyone can have a thorough understanding of what's in this. It's shared with the media, and, of course, parliamentary tradition and *Beauchesne's* would say that nothing could be shared with members outside of this Assembly before they're shared with members inside this Assembly as it relates to legislation.

When this was brought forward, one of the questions that was asked is: what are the consequences if this isn't followed? The government didn't put in any consequences if they break what is already a very loose period as opposed to a date. There were no consequences or ramifications for the government should they so

choose to do that. Okay. Presumably they will probably do it occasionally, once every four years, so then build that flexibility in through an actual amendment in the legislation rather than making a law that you know highly likely the government will not enforce.

I think that government should be law abiding. They should follow the laws of the land, whether they're laws that were in place before them or whether they were laws that they made. To make a law and clearly not have checks and balances in for it – and when we said, "Well, why is that?" the reason that was given was that, well, once every four-ish years there could be a spring election, so we would need the flexibility to not have the budget in February if that were the case. Well, then build it into the bill. Don't give yourself a parachute to hold yourself less accountable than what you're pretending to be accountable for in the bill that you're presenting. We're trying to simply build in that flexibility, that we know is already on the minds of senior staff in the Finance minister's office, into the bill rather than the government coming here and passing a bill that they have no intention of actually respecting or upholding.

Those are the two parts to the amendment. The first part is to actually follow the recommendation that the Premier so proudly stood beside the report author and said that he was very excited to have this report and he was going to be working to implement it. Actually do it. Pick a date. If you don't like the third Thursday, pick another date, but please respect your own recommendations. Respect values that have been in place in other provinces in this country and that have been able to be upheld. Pick a date. That's what the recommendation was. Please consider doing that by passing this amendment, I would say. If you have a different date, feel free to bring forward a different date, but please don't play games with Albertans and try to continue to misrepresent facts on this matter.

Number two, of course, was the piece around acknowledging that there could very well be elections in the spring. Rather than passing laws that you have no intention of respecting or upholding or abiding by, make laws that you're already thinking through the various scenarios. That's why you didn't put any consequences in here for failing to follow the law whereas when we pass other laws, whether they be laws around OH and S, we have consequences if people break those laws. If there are laws around speeding on highways, we have consequences if you break those laws. If it's good for the goose, it should be good for the government. I think that's why the government should be enthusiastically accepting this amendment.

Again, we can accept this amendment and still support the bill. It just makes it better. It makes it something that flows from the recommendation report and acknowledges that there could very well be elections in the spring. I would say it respects the values that were argued for so fiercely by members of the Wildrose when Premier Redford was in office and called for an election season. I think a lot of folks here probably remember how appalled they and many others were by that disrespectful attempt to pretend that there was something that was happening around a specific date when there clearly wasn't, and that's exactly what's happening in this bill.

This is an opportunity to take a bill and make it a bit better. As private members we have the opportunity to raise our voices and our votes to do so, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do that here momentarily.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you. While I appreciate so much the content and the motive behind this, I have to only think back to March. On March 1 of this year our government had certain ideas and plans and a budget and a schedule in place and a calendar, and by March 17 our entire world had upended. We had a public state of emergency called in the province of Alberta, and that wasn't something that I think was even on our docket of being a reality. While I appreciate the idea of having a fixed date, that binds us to one particular date.

In my riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche I have the fortunate/unfortunate circumstance of having a riding that's had multiple natural disasters and different states of local emergency called, and I would hate that a government would be saddled into a particular date even if something were happening outside our control. I just have to think to three weeks ago with the floods in Fort McMurray and the Fort Vermilion area. To think of having one particular date and having it in legislation that it is one particular date that we can bring forward the budget doesn't necessarily take into account the reality that we are a province that is immovable and has a variety of changes happening on a regular basis. Furthermore, I would almost question – my memory isn't a hundred per cent, but my recollection is that when you guys were part of the government, when the Official Opposition was in the government, not once was a budget tabled before March 31. I could very well be wrong – and I would love to be corrected if I am wrong – but I believe that that's something that's worth pointing out.

Having the fixed month for the election, I think, is achieving that right balance of having that 28-day period.

With that, thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1 on Bill 4?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the debate on Bill 4?

Seeing none, shall I call the question on Bill 4?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report Bill 4.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

3:30

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 17 Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020

Ms Sweet moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 10: Member Irwin]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Speaker, I do believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to go to one-minute bells for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak again to Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020. I believe we are on an amendment of referral to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. Can I confirm that?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. That's correct.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I speak in support of that amendment, that this bill be referred to the Committee on Families and Communities, because this is a significant piece of legislation that has an impact not only generally on Albertans with respect to mental health issues but also on a number of specific health professionals who would be affected by the implications of this act.

I want to begin with a little bit of background. I had an opportunity, Madam Speaker, to speak to Bill 17 earlier in second reading and posed a number of questions, and the Minister of Health was able to respond to some of those questions, which I appreciate. I will say that it still raises a number of questions about the content of this.

As an overview, of course, Madam Speaker, as you know, Bill 17 is an amendment to the existing Mental Health Act. There are a number of changes. While the Minister of Health indicated that they were not directly in response to a court decision that was made last year, in July 2019, which is titled J.H. versus Alberta Health Services, it is certainly a driving force, I think, behind the changes that we see right now proposed in Bill 17. In particular, I want to talk a little bit about that court case because it very significantly sort of drives, I believe, the motivation and the implementation of the changes in Bill 17.

For those who may not be aware, the decision in J.H. versus Alberta Health Services was around a matter that was brought before the courts as a result of an individual, who is not named for confidentiality purposes even within the court decision. J.H., as he's

referred to in the decision, was I believe a 49-year-old First Nations man from B.C. who was living in Alberta and who had suffered a brain injury and then, as a result of a number of different circumstances, found himself homeless.

He was brought into Foothills medical centre in Calgary as a result of his behaviour and concerns about his mental health. This was, I believe, in September 2014. This man, J.H., was reviewed and assessed by a medical professional at the centre, and an admission certificate was issued, a form 1 admission certificate as it's known, which basically detained J.H. against his will, which there's the authority to do under the Mental Health Act, detained that individual for I think it was almost eight months. There were a number of renewal certificates that were issued, which basically meant that there was concern that – as a result of mental health conditions, this man was held against his will and detained and received medical treatment.

Now, we don't take this lightly in this country. Of course, we believe that our bodily integrity is primary, that it's essential, that nobody should be able to interfere and detain us and deliver treatment without consent. We believe that's very important in our country, for good reason. We do understand, of course, that there are circumstances where individuals may as a result of mental health conditions or various other – not only mental health conditions, but they may be in a state where they're not able to make decisions with true autonomy about their health. But we must be very careful, of course, about when we either provide medical treatment against the consent or will of an individual or detain somebody as a result of that.

Now, the decision is quite long, Madam Speaker – this is a decision that was issued in July 2019 – but it's important because the process by which the gentleman in this case, J.H., was detained was reviewed. There were a significant number of issues that were identified throughout the process by which these admission certificates were administered and renewed, and the right of this individual to understand his appeal rights – because there are appeal rights under the Mental Health Act – and to appeal the certificates that were issued and the process by which that appeal and review process was handled was under consideration in this decision.

There was, as I indicated, quite a long decision issued by the courts, and what's specific for our consideration here today, of course, is that the court ultimately struck down a number of provisions of the existing Mental Health Act and, in particular, struck those down on the basis that they were unconstitutional, that in fact the process by which this individual in particular was held and detained and received treatment was actually contrary to section 7 of the Charter, which are the rights to life and liberty and self-determination; to section 9, about arbitrary detention; and to section 10, about the right to have appropriate legal counsel.

The court was quite clear that the process that exists in the highlighted sections of the Mental Health Act were unconstitutional, and in its decision the court directed the government to basically amend these sections within one year. In the event that they were not amended, these provisions were struck down; they are of no force and effect. Basically, the government of Alberta had a year to bring forward either amending legislation or to decide not to amend the Mental Health Act and to basically let those provisions be struck down and no longer exist.

I understand that the Minister of Health indicated in his comments earlier in second reading on this bill that while that court decision was a factor, it was not the only factor as to why this bill was brought forward today, but certainly it had to be a motivating factor because we are sitting here. We are in June 2020. In a month these provisions would essentially be struck down, so that does lead to

some urgency, to some effect, to some intent to actually bring this legislation forward.

Now, because of that timeline, that we don't usually see with legislation, where there is actually a court-imposed timeline by which legislation must be brought forward, I can appreciate that there was some urgency perhaps in how this bill was prepared and potentially the possibility – and we believe that might be the case – that there wasn't the fulsome opportunity required to actually consult or speak with affected stakeholders.

Now, I think I'd like to talk a little bit, Madam Speaker, about the fact that what is presented here in Bill 17, the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, is not, I guess, word for word responsive to the direction of the court, which outlined a number of sections specifically that were struck down. For example, the ruling in J.H. versus AHS struck down these specific sections of the Mental Health Act: section 2, which is the admission certificate provision; section 4(1) and section 4(2), which talk about the effect of one admission certificate in the Mental Health Act; section 7(1), which talks about the effect of two admission certificates; and then section 8(1) and section 8(3) of the Mental Health Act, which deal with renewal certificates. Those were the specific provisions that were struck down and have no force and effect.

3:40

I raised this question earlier in second reading because it is a bit of a complicated situation. We have an existing act, we have a court decision which strikes down certain sections, we have a bill that's being introduced that amends only some of the sections that were struck down but not others, and in the background, I think, Madam Speaker, we also need to keep in mind that there's an appeal of the decision in J.H. versus AHS.

Even for somebody like myself, who has legal training and quite enjoys sort of the puzzle-piecing of that work, looking at the existing act and looking at the ruling and the bill and piecing it all together, there is still great consideration that needs to be given to make sure that what is being brought forward in Bill 17 actually responds to the concerns raised by the court and to what actually is struck down by the court in J.H. versus AHS.

I know that the Minister of Health did respond to that concern. When I asked the question, "Well, why does Bill 17 only address certain provisions that were outlined by the court as being unconstitutional and not affect other sections?" the minister rose and said: "Well, that's because there are alternate changes. There are changes throughout Bill 17 that do address the court's concern." I believe that that probably is the intention, but I think we certainly need some time to determine whether or not that's actually the case, because we have a situation where we have certain sections struck down. Some have been amended; some have not. Some will still be existing currently in the Mental Health Act but will be struck down once the ruling of 12 months has expired. Then we have additional changes to other sections of the act which were intended – or are intended, according to the Minister of Health – to address the direction of the court, but we haven't yet determined whether or not that's actually the case, and I don't think stakeholders have had the opportunity to do that.

Most importantly, it seems to be that perhaps one of the most, I guess, comprehensive changes overall that's made in this bill – and it may be intended to address some of the concerns raised by the court in this decision – is to allow qualified health professionals to be involved in the assessment and the issuance of admission certificates. During our discussion earlier on Bill 2 the minister and I had a little discussion about – I'll call it a discussion. Of course, in the way we debate in this House, it doesn't really work out exactly like that. I outlined, for example, that in Bill 17, you know,

the definition of a qualified health professional is quite broad. It includes a physician and a nurse practitioner as well as all health professions that are currently governed under section 33(1)(a) of the Health Professions Act.

But, as the Minister of Health noted, regulations to the Mental Health Act may be created that designate which of those health professions would be included as one of those health professions that's able to issue an admission certificate under the act. We don't know yet what health professions those will be or that will be designated by regulation. The minister, I believe, in his discussion about this bill has referred substantially to nurse practitioners as being an additional category of health professional, beyond physicians, who are able to be involved in the issuance of admission certificates.

Certainly, the scope of what's set out in Bill 17 is much broader than that. It doesn't limit it to just nurse practitioners, which, of course, the minister and the drafters of the bill would very well be able to do if that was the only health professional that they wanted to provide this additional responsibility to do, to issue these admission certificates. They certainly could have limited it within the bill to just nurse practitioners. But it's not. It's quite broad, and we don't know yet what those regulations will look like and which other health professions would be involved in now issuing admission certificates.

I want to highlight once again the significance of admission certificates, because it is actually a health professional making a determination that somebody may be held against their will in a medical facility as a result of mental health issues. We, I think, need to have a fulsome discussion about which health professionals would be permitted or would be qualified to do that kind of work, especially because as it stands now, it's not that, for example, a health professional has to work in conjunction with a physician. It doesn't say that. Certainly, right now, the way Bill 17 is drafted, any one qualified health professional could make that determination.

I take the minister at his word that he certainly does not mean to include all health professionals listed under section 33(1)(a) because that would seem quite, I think we would all agree, absurd; for example, that a pharmacy technician, which is a health profession that is governed by the Health Professions Act, would be able to single-handedly, without consultation, issue an admission certificate to detain somebody on mental health grounds against their will. That certainly would not be what anybody would suggest. We certainly would not think that a naturopath, I would imagine, or a dietitian or a denturist would be granted that kind of significant authority.

I give these examples because right now what's drafted in Bill 17 as the definition of qualified health professional is incredibly broad, and I cannot foresee a situation where the government would suggest that any of these kinds of health professionals would be qualified to do this kind of work. We do, then, need to know which health professionals are intended to be captured by this. I would imagine that it's intended, of course, to include physicians and nurse practitioners as outlined here. I would imagine psychologists and psychiatrists would also be included, but right now the bill doesn't say that.

I'd also like, which is the basis of why this amendment is brought forward today that we should be referring this to the Committee on Families and Communities, to have that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was enjoying and appreciating the perspective my colleague from Edmonton-

Whitemud was bringing on the bill. I would hope that she might take a bit of time to wrap up those thoughts.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. As I was mentioning, because of the category, the broadened category, of individuals who would be involved now in the issuance of these admission certificates, I think we need to hear from those professional bodies, from those regulated authorities, and from those professionals about what their thoughts are on their role within this. Do they believe that they should have this authority?

I wonder. In light of the greater decision of the court, which was very clear about how carefully we must respect the constitutional rights of individuals who are being detained under the Mental Health Act, does a broader scope of health professional increase or decrease the risk of somebody being detained contrary to their rights under the Mental Health Act? I don't know the answer to that question because I'm not a health professional, but I certainly think that the clear direction, which is the impetus of this bill, from the court is that we need to be very careful before we are subscribing or prescribing or limiting the rights, the autonomous rights, of individuals to make decisions about the health treatment they receive and how they receive it. We have to be very cautious to make sure that we would do that carefully and with full respect of the rights of those individuals.

I see that there are other sections of the bill that are meant to address some of the procedural rights that might have been lacking in the earlier Mental Health Act. I commend those changes, but I still am not certain, given the way they're drafted, that they're actually guaranteeing those rights, particularly for individuals who are very vulnerable.

What I also think would be a valuable perspective to find out is – we have other models in place in other legislation where we do have security services or protective services that are issued, particularly in light of children, for example, children who are secured services. We have processes and we have an independent officer of the Legislature in that circumstance, which is the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. We do not have a similar independent office of the Legislature like that when it comes to adults, but adults under mental health care might also be equally as vulnerable as some children. We do have the mental health advocate outlined in here, but that is very clearly – very clearly – not an independent office of the Legislature. That is clearly, as we speak right now, Madam Speaker, actually a political appointment. So before we bestow significant rights on an individual like that, who doesn't have that independence, I think we need to evaluate and look at other circumstances before we are making a process that significantly affects the life and liberty of individuals with mental health conditions.

Madam Speaker, I believe that there is enough significant impact here that we need to hear from health professionals that might be now involved in issuing these admission certificates and to hear and evaluate other processes where independent advocates can certainly act on behalf of individuals' rights, whose rights might be subscribed.

For those reasons, I am fully in support of this amendment to refer this bill for further consideration, for an opportunity for input and consultation with stakeholders at the Committee on Families and Communities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the referral amendment. I, too, like my colleague, absolutely support this amendment to send this legislation to the Committee on Families and Communities so that some additional time and energy can be spent on this bill.

You know, as my colleague said – and I certainly appreciate her legal experience as quite a bit of this is very complex – I do think that this particular piece of legislation, like all pieces of legislation, honestly, is vitally important. Any of the changes that we make have the potential to impact people's lives in a way that we can't possibly imagine in this place sometimes.

I just wanted to add to my colleagues' comments. When we first started debating this bill, one of my questions to the Minister of Health was around precisely the thing that my colleague talked about, and that was on page 2. It talked about:

“qualified health professional” means a physician or nurse practitioner or a person who is registered under section 33(1)(a) of the Health Professions Act as a member of a health profession or of a category within a health profession designated by the regulations for the purposes of all or part of this Act.

[A cellphone rang] It certainly looks like someone is making a donation to their favourite charity.

Ms Hoffman: Make it to your favourite charity.

Ms Renaud: Oh. My favourite charity? Well, I've got lots. Pick one. They're all great.

I just wanted to add a little bit about – I knew there were a number of colleges in Alberta that would apply, but I actually was curious about the entire list, to really understand who was impacted, and I do think that a referral amendment to Families and Communities would allow a thorough discussion. You know, certainly nurse practitioners are incredibly educated and experienced and, I have no doubt, could contribute a great deal to this process, but there are also some other professions, I believe, that potentially could be included in this. Again, it's not for me to make that decision – it is for other folks, professionals in this field – but I wanted to give the Chamber a sense of the details of the list.

The regulated health professions and colleges: it lists a number of them. My colleague mentioned some. This includes dental hygienists, technologists, dentists, denturists, dietitians, hearing aid practitioners, LPNs, medical diagnostic and therapeutic technologists, midwives, naturopaths, OTs, opticians, optometrists, paramedics, pharmacists, pharmacy techs, physiotherapists, and so on and so on. You can imagine that it includes psychologists, obviously, social workers, speech-language pathologists, respiratory techs. Certainly, there are some that we can probably envision that wouldn't necessarily – their field of expertise or their scope of work would not qualify them to weigh in on this matter. But there are some that likely could.

I think, once again, I understand that the legislation sort of opens the door to the creation of regulation, but I do think that something this important is worth taking the time. I understand that the government is likely facing some time constraints given the court case that my colleague mentioned earlier, but I would encourage members of this Assembly to do just that. Sadly, in the over a year that we've been here debating, I don't believe – maybe I'm wrong; you can correct me if I'm wrong – any of the government bills have actually taken time to go to committee to be thoroughly looked at. Maybe that's something that all governments in general, you know, believe. I think we all like to believe that we get it right the first time and that we don't make mistakes, but maybe it's time for

people to understand that getting input before you pass something, before it becomes law, before it changes and has the potential to impact people's lives is worthy of having another look at.

Some of the other things that I mentioned when we talked about this bill the last time. One of the things that I noted in the decision – again, I am not a lawyer, so reading this decision was challenging at times – is that the decision talks about, strangely enough, the preamble to the bill. What it said specifically: it talked about the fact that other Canadian jurisdictions have preambles or purposes or purpose clauses. I do think that there are a number of pieces of legislation that we've seen of late where there is a preamble, and what it really does is that it introduces, I guess, the scope of the bill or the position that the bill would like to take. Actually, in the document about the case, *J.H. versus Alberta Health Services*, they talk about the value of having a preamble and then note that other jurisdictions do that. Perhaps that's something to think about to give some overall direction to this piece of legislation.

I also wanted to correct the record a little bit. When I first spoke to this bill, I actually made a mistake and commended the Minister of Health for having the mental health advocate not be a partisan appointment like the health and the seniors' advocates. Sadly, I was incorrect about that.

Ms Pancholi: The same person.

Ms Renaud: It actually is the very same person.

The Mental Health Patient Advocate is indeed Ms Harrington, who was a political operative and an appointment by the UCP. This person is also responsible – she is the Health Advocate as well as the Seniors Advocate. I think we probably understood the value of this role before COVID-19. I think that we are all now very aware of just how much work we have to do, particularly as it relates to seniors and, of course, to mental health supports and to health overall.

I am not questioning her particular skill set right now. I actually don't know the woman. I've never looked at her skill set. What I am questioning is a partisan appointment. What I am questioning is collapsing three different positions into one when I think we could all agree that these are important positions and that the workload is large. I mean, you can just look through their annual reports to see the scope of the work that each position entails. It is huge.

To give you a bit of a sense, the Mental Health Patient Advocate, under the Mental Health Act, actually was designed to help people who are detained in hospital under admission or renewal certificates and people under community treatment orders. Their role is to investigate complaints, and they are supposed to act independently, obviously, of the health system. Their staffing complement is not huge. I imagine the workload of this particular position is large. Again, I would question that. I would hope that any government would endeavour to be as transparent as possible, particularly in their appointments to positions like this. That's one issue.

The other issue, obviously, is the fact that this government has collapsed three separate positions and created one. I think that we've all probably been there when you take on more and more work and more and more responsibilities. Obviously, you have less time to pay specific attention to issues. I think mental health and being a mental health advocate are definitely important.

The other thing that I really wanted to talk about in this piece of legislation was that I continue to see throughout the legislation – and I'm really hoping that the minister will at some point answer these questions. I know that I brought it up the last time I spoke. I tried to go through the legislation and look at the original piece to understand what the difference was and why that was brought in,

but there is a piece that's been added to a number of different sections. For example, under Admission Certificate:

When a qualified health professional examines a person and is of the opinion that the person

- (a) is suffering from [a] mental disorder . . .
- (c) is, within a reasonable time, likely to cause harm . . .

and all of those things that were originally in the legislation. There has been a point that's added, and it says: "has the potential to benefit from treatment for the mental disorder."

Certainly, that makes sense. I don't believe that any person would ever admit someone to treatment without believing that it would help. I don't believe that for one second. However, I think that, given the unknown nature of which profession will be involved in determining or making these decisions, it's incumbent on us to ask the questions. What does that mean? What is the standard? What is the criteria? If there are indeed tools that are acceptable that will be used to measure those things, what are they? You see this phrase scattered throughout this legislation, where it had not been before. Again, I'm not assigning any malicious intent by any stretch to anybody. I would just like some clarification as to why that is. If there is intent to further elaborate on this piece in regulation in terms of what tools will be used, how will that be measured? I would certainly be happy to hear that.

4:00

The other thing I wanted to do before my time runs out. You know, my colleague talked a lot about the information that's available on the court case – and that was, again, J.H. and Alberta Health Services and the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General of Alberta and Calgary Legal Guidance – that this is likely the impetus for some of the decisions or the timing, I guess, of this particular bill. But I think that for us nonlawyers – and I'm sure that the vast majority of us in this room are nonlawyers – there are sections of this decision that are really important to read and, I think, underscore just the thoughtfulness that has gone into the decision to explain why the decision was reached and why the recommendations were made. I think it's worth any member's time that is interested actually in understanding these changes and more, and I would like to underline "and more." The things that this amendment act introduces: you know, I'm glad that that's being addressed, but there are more things that need to be done.

I'm not going to read from it, but I would just like to give you a little bit of a flavour of this. As my colleague mentioned, this particular person, a 49-year-old person, a member of a First Nation in British Columbia, had – and I think this is really important – no history of mental illness but, as a result of an injury, ended up in the health care system. I mentioned this the last time I spoke. As a result of being released after treatment – and I'm sure many people understand the impact of a traumatic brain injury, that it certainly changes your life from that point on. But once this person was released, whether it was job loss or whatever other issues came up, this person ended up being homeless. As you can imagine, once these things start to happen, things snowball and get worse.

Following this, this person received treatment and then again was kept for quite a long time and then was found to not have been able to obtain legal counsel who could help him challenge the certificates. Nor was he aware of his other rights. Then it goes on further. Why I'm sort of highlighting this is that it goes on to talk about the importance of a patient advocate.

Going back to my comments about the Mental Health Patient Advocate, that's why it is so important to have someone in this position who at the very least has some experience in this field. At the very least, although it's not an independent officer, we can be assured – and by "we" I mean Albertans – that any decisions or any

follow-up or any additional work that will be done will not be partisan in any way and will not be, I guess, tainted by any sort of allegiance to any government at all, that this person would be solely focused on what is right for Albertans.

I think even for the members opposite, you have to admit that had we been in government, had we collapsed three advocate offices and appointed a partisan person, someone, let's say, that was the executive director of our political party – if we had appointed that person to these advocate offices, I'm pretty sure that you would have had some questions or you would have raised an eyebrow. I'm quite sure you would have.

Ms Hoffman: I think it would have been more than that.

Ms Renaud: Yeah. I think it probably would have been quite a bit more than that, but sadly . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, comments through the chair.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Some of the heckling is because they wouldn't have been qualified – well, I'm not going to engage in this. I said earlier that I'm not commenting on Ms Harrington's qualifications because I don't know what they are. [interjection] I don't actually find that funny at all. What I am saying is that the appearance . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think my colleague had a few thoughts left to share. I would appreciate it if she'd like to take advantage of the moment to complete those.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. You know, it's unfortunate. I just really want Albertans to understand – and, again, I am certainly not commenting on the qualifications of any advocates. What I am saying is that sometimes the appearance of impropriety: it says something.

The thing that I'm most concerned about, actually, is the enormity of the work assigned to the Seniors Advocate, the Health Advocate, and the Mental Health Patient Advocate, of course. These are enormous jobs. Enormous jobs. If you just take a few moments to look at their annual reports, look at their recommendations, look at the scope of the investigations that they do, I think you will begin to appreciate the enormity of the work.

So collapsing these three offices and then having one person take on all of those roles: other than saving money, I would like to hear the rationale from government. What data did you use to make these decisions? What is it that led you to believe that it was in the best interests of Albertans to collapse three offices, that had previously existed, into one? I'm not even talking about the partisan appointment; I'm just talking about the workload and the enormity of responsibility of these three particular offices. I am, certainly, hopeful that the Minister of Health at some point will come back and answer some of the questions.

I think that all of us in this House – and I've said this a number of times. I don't believe any of us try to get this job or run for this job or do this job to harm anybody. I think we actually all show up in this place in our own way to do what we can to make lives better for people. Now, it's debatable, sort of the journey that we take to get there, but I don't believe that any of us come here to cause harm to anybody. So I would like to know why these decisions were made and if there is a rational explanation, if there are data to support it,

if there is science to support it. You know, I'm happy to support something that can be demonstrated to be the right thing to do – I actually am – but I would like to hear from the Minister of Health. There are a number of questions, particularly in this legislation, that have been outlined so far. Perhaps I'm not understanding something or perhaps there's a plan to develop regulations around some of the issues that I've raised. I'm certainly open and happy to hear those explanations, so I will wait for that.

That being said, I'm going to take my seat and let my colleague continue. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to REF1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 17 and indeed the referral amendment we have in front of us suggesting that this bill should be referred to committee for review. Now, I want to just follow on some of the comments from my hon. colleague from St. Albert. She was speaking of the expanded role of the Mental Health Patient Advocate. She was commenting that she did not want to speak to the qualifications of Ms Harrington, the former executive director of the United Conservative Party, who is appointed to that role.

I would note that while she has a number of qualifications indeed and I have no doubt that she is a capable person in many respects, I would note that she does not have any qualifications regarding health care or mental health care or experience in those fields. Now, particularly when we are talking about Bill 17 expanding the role of the Mental Health Patient Advocate to include an expanded legal responsibility to help people who've been detained in hospital or who are receiving mandatory treatment in the community, I think that's worth reflecting on.

4:10

Now, certainly, I know we have an incredibly capable public service. When we were in government, our ministers of the Crown took great advantage of the opportunity that they had to work from the knowledge of our public service in areas where we do not have an extensive, great knowledge, and I recognize that ministers of the Crown themselves do not have to have vast experience in a particular area before they become responsible for it.

I would note, Madam Speaker, that there is some concern around the manner in which this particular individual, who does not have that experience, as we talk about the reasons to refer this . . .

Speaker's Ruling Referring to Nonmembers

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but we are not on the path of the amendment, which we should be debating. Just a reminder that it's REF1.

I will also express some caution when speaking about those who are not members in this Assembly and, certainly, don't have the ability to speak for themselves. I know that that's not uncommon in this place, but I would be remiss if I didn't express some caution as we proceed with this debate in that regard.

Please proceed on amendment REF1 to Bill 17.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly, Madam Speaker. I take your caution and will continue to debate about reasons why this bill should be sent for referral.

Indeed this bill adds additional powers to the Mental Health Patient Advocate. I think one of the reasons for referral is because of what we have seen in this case, that the individual we have serving as the mental health advocate – and this has nothing to do with this individual personally, but I'm just noting the manner in which she was appointed. The Health minister had an open process in front of him. Again, I think this is a reason why we should consider referring this bill that was brought forward by that same Health minister and involves that same individual who is the mental health advocate mentioned here and empowered in Bill 17.

A reason we should be making that referral is because that minister, who brought forward this bill to which we are putting forward this amendment to refer, set aside an open process to look for an individual that indeed had the qualifications and perhaps would have had more knowledge under this provision in Bill 17 to provide this advice to individuals who are in a fairly serious situation when they are needing to reach out to the mental health advocate. A reason why this bill should be referred is because that minister chose to set aside that entire process and simply appoint an individual who does not have specific knowledge or experience in a realm, which is covered here under Bill 17, where individuals are facing possible admission not by their choice.

In this case the individual that is being empowered through this bill to have greater authority and responsibility in assisting that individual is someone that was chosen outside of due process, outside of a proper open process, where we could have considered all of the qualified individuals and people who might have had the specific knowledge already or experience in this field. Instead we had a direct appointment by the Minister of Health, who brought forward this bill, which we are suggesting should be referred to committee.

His decision to appoint the former executive director of the United Conservative Party: I find that concerning, Madam Speaker. I think that Albertans find that concerning. It gives us pause to consider what this government's thoughts are in terms of how it is approaching things like this particular bill, which we are suggesting should be referred to committee. Again, we have seen that this is a government which will make decisions which are not necessarily in the best interests of Albertans.

When we are dealing with a bill which has such a serious impact on individuals in a very vulnerable situation, which is in fact setting aside some of their personal rights to personal autonomy, Albertans want to know that they can trust their government and that it is a government that is being transparent in doing all of its due diligence and not, say, considering appointing someone, for example, simply because they would be helpful in covering over mistakes that government might make, hypothetically speaking, Madam Speaker.

Now, returning to discuss some other portions of the bill, Bill 17 also proposes to make some other changes. This bill also removes the sunset clause for the review of this legislation. This is another reason I think this bill should be referred, Madam Speaker.

Now, I took part and I believe you yourself may have taken part as a member of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. I hesitate to interrupt. The Speaker does not take part in any committees, nor has an opinion on any matter in any way, shape, or form, which is what is relevant when I as a member am in this chair. Just for clarification for the record.

Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: Certainly, Madam Speaker. A number of individuals, who are still present in this Chamber, when they were in opposition and are now sitting in government, took part along

with me in a review of the Mental Health Act. That was a review of the Mental Health Act that, as I recall, was mandated as part of the five-year sunset clause within this bill. Indeed, that was a robust process. I found that incredibly educational. I did not know much about this particular area of the health care system.

Indeed, it was highly educational in hearing from many people about their experiences in the system. Indeed, we heard from individuals who had been through the system. I recall receiving e-mails from people telling me about their experiences and their concerns and things they would like to see change, having the opportunity to hear from, as I recall, law enforcement individuals who work with different agencies and supports, folks from the legal community.

When we are again talking about a piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, which has such a profound effect on people's lives and indeed has the power to suspend some of their most personal rights, it seems reasonable to me that that legislation should be reviewed on a regular basis. Every five years is not an onerous requirement. That's generally going to be once per term of a government. That sounds to me to be a reasonable thing. So far I have not heard any explanation from the government why they feel that they are omniscient enough that any changes they make now are good enough forever and anon and should only be reviewed whenever they feel it should happen to be appropriate or any future government should happen to feel it is appropriate. I think the people of Alberta are owed better than that. I am concerned that this government so far without justification, without providing any reason is removing that sunset clause.

Section 19 adds additional provisions for a peace officer and their involvement in how a person is conveyed after an individual has undergone an assessment. A peace officer may be involved in the, for lack of a better term, apprehension. I hesitate to use that word, particularly in our current climate, as we discuss individuals who may be struggling with their mental health and their interactions with peace officers, but I believe it's actually the word that's used. Anyway, when that person is picked up by the peace officer and brought for an assessment, I can understand that involvement there. We don't know what condition that person is in. They may be in a state in which it is difficult to calm them down or work with them.

We know that peace officers and police officers do receive training in de-escalation, but we also know – indeed, due to the events in the U.S. and the murder of George Floyd recently, I've had cause to go back and review many of the situations under which black, brown, and indigenous individuals have died at the hands of police. I will tell you that in a large number of those situations, those were individuals who were known to struggle with their mental health, and in many of those instances police were called because that person was having a mental health episode.

Now, I don't bring that up to pass any judgment on police. This is a conversation we are having as a society and I think we are going to be continuing to have, and I hope we have it at depth and that it leads to steps and action like we have not seen before. But all that just to provide the context here, Madam Speaker, when this bill is now adding in additional involvement of a peace officer after that individual has been assessed.

What this adds in is it says that after an individual has been assessed, a peace officer shall

- (a) convey the person to the person's home, the location of apprehension or appropriate accommodations, if no admission certificate is issued after the examination, or
- (b) convey the person to a facility for a further assessment and examination, if an admission certificate has been issued.

In this situation if an individual has been assessed and it's been determined that in fact it is appropriate for them to simply go home,

could we not consider the possibility that perhaps a mental health professional or a social worker or another individual who has some level of knowledge, experience, and authority, who may in fact be known to the individual might be utilized in this situation, recognizing that in many of these cases we may see a disproportionate involvement of individuals from racialized communities?

4:20

As we are currently recognizing and discussing that in many cases those individuals may not have, for whatever reason, a positive association with police officers or by extension peace officers, it seems to me it would be a reasonable consideration that we would, for an individual who has been assessed and determined to, in fact, be no threat to themselves or to others – that individual could be conveyed back home by someone who for them would be less traumatic or may be less of an issue and indeed allow our peace officers to do the important work that we need them to do as we see conversations are now even beginning to occur about how we can better utilize other professionals in areas where the police themselves, Madam Speaker, I have heard say that they do not want to be the ones that have to deal with those situations because that is not what their job is.

That's another area I would look forward to having more opportunity to discuss or perhaps hear from the Minister of Health his thoughts on why we are going with just the specific provision there of a peace officer and if there might not be room, as we saw in another section of the bill, which my colleagues have talked about, where other health professionals are indeed being involved and made part, and we are expanding the opportunities that we're aware of.

Indeed, there is the section of the bill that talks about involving nurse practitioners. Indeed, Madam Speaker, in general I would support that. I think we recognize that within the health care system we have a variety of people with a variety of skills, and indeed that's true also within mental health. We recognize that in some cases it is better to have some folks available than others. Having nurse practitioners able to assess, examine, and supervise patients who are receiving community treatment while maintaining physician oversight where necessary: that seems to me to be a reasonable step.

We know that indeed family doctors can be under a lot of pressure. They have a lot of patients, and certainly in the current environment this government has not done much to sort of help them in relieving their stress and making it easier for them to do their jobs. Even psychiatrists and others that are involved – certainly, the changes that this government has made have rippled throughout the health care system and made it more difficult for many, so allowing nurse practitioners to help out in some of these situations could help relieve some of that stress.

In general I believe that there are some good and positive things. Indeed, as my colleagues have noted, the minister has taken some of the recommendations from the ruling and moved them forward. There are other recommendations which do not seem to have been taken, so I look forward to further discussion on why that might have been. As I said, there are perhaps a couple of areas where there could be some adjustments, and perhaps I'll have the opportunity to talk with my colleagues about the opportunity to bring other amendments.

At this point we're talking about the referral, and that is why I believe this bill should have the opportunity for further discussion by a broad range of stakeholders who could address some of the issues I brought up, particularly with new awareness, as I've mentioned, around the interactions of racialized individuals indeed from the black community, the indigenous community, and others and the systemic racism they encounter as part of these systems to

ensure that as we make these changes, we are not furthering the violence and impact of that systemic racism on these individuals in a vulnerable time instead.

With that, I will take my seat and look forward to further debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to amendment REF1 on Bill 17?

Seeing none, I will ask the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:26 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Gray	Loyola	Shepherd
Hoffman	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Allard	Hunter	Reid
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Rowswell
Copping	Nicolaides	Smith
Ellis	Nixon, Jason	Toor

Getson	Nixon, Jeremy	Turton
Glubish	Panda	van Dijken
Goodridge	Pon	Walker
Gotfried	Rehn	Williams
Guthrie		

Totals: For – 6 Against – 25

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We are now back on the main bill. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, anyone wishing to close debate?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: No. Okay.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn the Legislative Assembly until Monday, whatever the date of next Monday is, at 1:30 p.m.

An Hon. Member: The 15th.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Monday, the 15th. Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to Thursday, June 11, 2020

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Critical Infrastructure Defence Act (Kenney)

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

Second Reading — 12-18 (*Feb. 26, 2020 morn.*), 96-98 (*Mar. 2, 2020 aft.*), (*May 27, 2020 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 859-61 (*May 28, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 861-69 (*May 28, 2020 morn., passed on division*)

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

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

Second Reading — 857-58 (*May 28, 2020 morn.*), 1004-09 (*Jun. 2, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1238-44 (*Jun. 9, 2020 eve., passed with amendments*)

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

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

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

Committee of the Whole — 465-76 (*Apr. 7, 2020 aft.*), 477-507 (*Apr. 7, 2020 eve.*), 572-83 (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve.*), 659-66 (*May 6, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 703-09 (*May 7, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 12, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2020 c8]

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

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

Second Reading — 858 (*May 28, 2020 morn.*), 869-75 (*May 28, 2020 morn.*), 933-35 (*Jun. 1, 2020 aft.*), 970-72 (*Jun. 1, 2020 eve.*), 1040-43 (*Jun. 2, 2020 eve.*), 1077 (*Jun. 3, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1257-66 (*Jun. 10, 2020 aft.*), 1311-16 (*Jun. 11, 2020 aft., passed*)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bill 7 — Responsible Energy Development Amendment Act, 2020 (Savage)

First Reading — 827 (*May 27, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 858-59 (*May 28, 2020 morn.*), 891-99 (*May 28, 2020 aft.*), 972-76 (*Jun. 1, 2020 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1266-72 (*Jun. 10, 2020 aft., adjourned; amendments introduced*)

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

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

Second Reading — 509-21 (*Apr. 8, 2020 morn.*), 551-58 (*Apr. 8, 2020 aft.*), 559-72 (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 593-618 (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve.*), 671-73 (*May 6, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 709-12 (*May 7, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 12, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on May 12, 2020, except Part 2, which comes into force on July 1, 2020; SA 2020 cP-26.87]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on April 2, 2020; certain sections took effect on earlier dates; SA 2020 c5]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Committee of the Whole — 583-93 (*Apr. 8, 2020 eve.*), 619-35 (*Apr. 9, 2020 morn.*), 648-57 (*Apr. 9, 2020 aft.*), 673-74 (*May 6, 2020 morn.*), 688-99 (*May 6, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 699-701 (*May 6, 2020 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 12, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on May 12, 2020, with exceptions; SA 2020 c7]

Bill 14 — Utility Payment Deferral Program Act (Nally)

First Reading — 687 (*May 6, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 724-45 (*May 7, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 758-86 (*May 8, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 786-90 (*May 8, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 12, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on May 12, 2020, with certain provisions having effect as of March 18, 2020; SA 2020 cU-4]

Bill 15 — Choice in Education Act, 2020 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 887-88 (*May 28, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 937-54 (*Jun. 1, 2020 eve.*), 1011-40 (*Jun. 2, 2020 eve.*), 1058-67 (*Jun. 3, 2020 aft.*), 1228-38 (*Jun. 9, 2020 eve., passed*)

Bill 16 — Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020 (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 888 (*May 28, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 954-70 (*Jun. 1, 2020 eve.*), 1109-12 (*Jun. 3, 2020 eve.*), 1127-35 (*Jun. 4, 2020 aft.*), 1179-81 (*Jun. 8, 2020 eve.*), 1209-22 (*Jun. 9, 2020 aft.*), 1285-96 (*Jun. 10, 2020 eve., passed*)

Bill 17 — Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020 (Shandro)

First Reading — 1125 (*Jun. 4, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1203-09 (*Jun. 9, 2020 aft.*), 1272-74 (*Jun. 10, 2020 aft.*), 1316-23 (*Jun. 11, 2020 aft., passed*)

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

First Reading — 912 (*Jun. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 989-1004 (*Jun. 2, 2020 aft.*), 1011 (*Jun. 2, 2020 eve., passed*)

Bill 19 — Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Amendment Act, 2020 (Shandro)

First Reading — 989 (*Jun. 2, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1079-98 (*Jun. 3, 2020 eve., passed*)

Bill 20 — Real Estate Amendment Act, 2020 (Glubish)

First Reading — 1057 (*Jun. 3, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1125-27 (*Jun. 4, 2020 aft.*), 1169-79 (*Jun. 8, 2020 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1185-90 (*Jun. 8, 2020 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1279-85 (*Jun. 10, 2020 eve., passed*)

Bill 21 — Provincial Administrative Penalties Act (Schweitzer)

First Reading — 1125 (*Jun. 4, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1181-85 (*Jun. 8, 2020 eve.*), 1296-97 (*Jun. 10, 2020 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 22 — Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (Hunter)

First Reading — 1301-02 (*Jun. 11, 2020 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act (Gottfried)

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

Second Reading — 914-26 (*Jun. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1156-61 (*Jun. 8, 2020 aft., adjourned*)

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

First Reading — 136 (*Mar. 5, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), 1149-56 (*Jun. 2, 2020 aft., reported to Assembly;*), 1156 (*Jun. 8, 2020 aft., not proceeded with on division*)

Bill 203 — Pension Protection Act (Gray)

First Reading — 1148 (*Jun. 8, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

Bill Pr1 — The Sisters of the Precious Blood of Edmonton Repeal Act (Williams)

First Reading — 1125 (*Jun. 4, 2020 aft., passed*)

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