



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 17, 2020

Day 33

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
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)
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Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
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Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UCP), Government House Leader
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
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Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services
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Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
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Dang
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Reid
Stephan
Toor

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goodridge
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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Carson
Ganley
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Guthrie
Neudorf
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Rutherford
Yao

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Schow
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Lovely
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
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Deol
Ganley
Goehring
Goodridge
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Neudorf
Walker
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Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Ellis
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Glasgo
Horner
Irwin
Neudorf
Nielsen
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sigurdson, L.
Sigurdson, R.J.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
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Carson
Deol
Ganley
Issik
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Lovely
Loyola
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Reid
Renaud
Turton
Yao

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Chair: Ms Phillips
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Reid
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Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Milliken
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
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Dach
Feehan
Getson
Loewen
Rehn
Rosin
Sabir
Singh
Smith
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Members' Statements

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

Men's Health Week

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although the COVID-19 public health crisis has placed the focus of many in our community on stopping the spread of this contagious and dangerous illness through our communities – this is, of course, an essential focus – we also need to recognize that health goes far beyond contagious illness. This week marks Canadian Men's Health Week. It's a time that places focus on the unhealthy lifestyles that many Canadian men lead and brings awareness to the ways that men can reduce their risk factors.

Our lifestyle choices contribute immensely to our overall well-being. For many Canadian men, chronic conditions cause significant harm to their health and well-being. According to the Canadian Men's Health Foundation 75 per cent of Canadian men are borderline unhealthy or simply unhealthy. This includes the more than 80 per cent of men who say that they are stressed by work. Sixty-two per cent have unhealthy eating habits, half don't get enough exercise, and 20 per cent do smoke. These are all factors that increase men's risk for serious illness, and they can be fatal.

But the good news, Mr. Speaker, is that the majority of men's health problems can be prevented by adopting healthy lifestyle habits. Changes like taking time to exercise, getting better sleep, reducing alcohol intake, and quitting smoking can significantly improve our health and well-being. Seemingly small decisions to take charge of our health can make a big difference. Being honest with doctors, getting screened for common illnesses like colorectal cancer, and adopting healthier daily habits can extend and improve men's health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

High School Graduates 2020

Member Irwin:

To the class of 2020, I wanted to write you a note
About the world you're facing; I'm not trying to get your
vote.

I wanted you to know that we're here for you
Even though it seems there's not much we can do.

We know you've lived through a lot in just a few years,
And for all that you've done, you deserve our cheers.

You've seen so much. You're the COVID class.
If you can conquer that, there's nothing you can't smash.

It hasn't been easy being apart from friends for so long,
But you've handled it well, and you've been so strong.

But know that if you're struggling, those feelings won't
last.

Remember that one day high school will be the past.

You're kind and you care. You know life is not just
about you.

You'll remember Black Lives Matter, and you'll act on
it, too.

You don't judge others for who they love or who they are.
You know the wounds of hate and anger leave a nasty
scar.

You're pushing for truth and for reconciliation,
And you're fighting for a more just and equitable nation.

You know that climate change is real and a crisis, in fact,
And it's entirely on us if we fail to act.

As you plot your path forward, it won't all be smooth,
But your journey is yours. You've got nothing to prove.

The next steps might be daunting as you step into the
unknown,
But I promise you that you're never truly alone.

Look, I know I should talk to you about hopes and dreams,
But the reality is life is not always what it seems.

You see, the dreams are stories within you yet to be told.
They're the passions that nudge you and urge you to be
bold.

And when the world seems big and the problems
immense,
Know that with community nothing is too intense.

I know you're discouraged in so many ways,
But we'll be right here beside you as you fight for better
days.

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

Commercial Tenancies Protection

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small businesses across Alberta have been greatly affected by COVID-19. From very early on small-business owners in my constituency requested commercial rent and liquidity supports. Our government partnered with the federal government to create the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program as a way to help residential property owners reduce or forgive rent for small-business tenants impacted by COVID-19. The application process for the CECRA opened on May 25 and was designed to reduce rent for small-business tenants by 75 per cent for April, May, June. Unfortunately, many of the small-business owners in my constituency reported difficulty accessing this program.

That is why I was pleased to see the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism respond to the needs of small-business owners by announcing relaunch funding of up to \$5,000 and by introducing Bill 23, the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act. This act would cover the period from March 17 to August 31 and would protect eligible commercial tenants from having their leases terminated due to nonpayment of rent as a result of the pandemic. This act would also prevent landlords from raising rent and charging late fees and penalties on missed rent. Commercial tenants with tenancy agreements that will be eligible for the CECRA program but whose landlords have chosen not to participate

would be protected by this act. Commercial lease agreements where tenants have had to close their business due to public health orders or have had their business revenues decline by 25 per cent or more as a result of the pandemic would also be protected.

While Bill 23 will not undo any evictions or lease terminations that happened before the legislation was tabled, any late fees, penalties, or rent increases imposed between March 17 and August 31, 2020, would need to be reimbursed.

I would like to thank the minister on behalf of the business owners in Calgary-South East for listening and for quickly responding to their needs.

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

Campus Saint-Jean

Mr. Dach: Merci, M. le Président. Depuis plus de 100 ans, le Campus Saint-Jean occupe une place incontournable dans la Francophonie albertaine. Seul établissement postsecondaire francophone en Alberta, il forme les enseignants, juristes, chercheurs, infirmiers, organisateurs communautaires et fonctionnaires qui répondent aux besoins des francophones en Alberta et à travers le pays.

Or, ce milieu de vie essentiel au rayonnement du français est menacé car les compressions répétées du gouvernement fragilisent l'ensemble du secteur public et des universités mais ont une incidence particulière sur l'avenir du Campus Saint-Jean. Depuis l'arrêt Mahe de 1990, les écoles francophones se sont multipliées sur le territoire. Depuis 2014, le campus a donc vu sa population étudiante croître de 40 pour cent, pour atteindre aujourd'hui près de mille personnes. Les premiers touchés par les compressions sont les étudiants, qui verront l'offre de cours réduite et des programmes disparaître.

Le recul menace aussi une population internationale et immigrante francophone, venue notamment de l'Afrique, qui enrichit et dynamise la Francophonie albertaine. Appuyer la Francophonie – un objectif avoué de la politique en matière de Francophonie du gouvernement de l'Alberta – implique la reconnaissance de dépenses supplémentaires inhérentes à l'existence même d'un écosystème francophone comme le Campus Saint-Jean. Le gouvernement de l'Alberta doit prendre en considération la réalité particulière du campus en le finançant adéquatement. La survie de la seule institution postsecondaire francophone en Alberta en dépend.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a translation from French to English isn't required. From time to time it's nice, for the benefit of all members in the Assembly that may not speak French, to have the translation, but it isn't required. If it was provided, it can always be provided at the tabling tables for all members of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Camrose has the call.

Rodeo

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For over a century communities in my constituency have hosted some of the best rodeos in the province. For example, the Bruce Stampede started in 1914 and is one of the oldest events of its kind in Canada, and it's a big part of the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association circuit. It has brought joy and entertainment in the community of Bruce and others in my constituency, but it also draws in fans and competitors from as far away as Texas and Nova Scotia.

For me, growing up on the prairies meant going to as many rodeos as possible. My grandfather was a huge fan of rodeo, and he had spent a good portion of his time training and selling horses. He would say to us: "Girls, I'm taking you to the rodeo this weekend.

You are my granddaughters, and I'll make sure you attend at minimum one rodeo every year." We'd pack up the whole family into the van, and off we would go. My grandfather's pledge was one rodeo per year, but fortunately we would always go to more. These events were such great family fun.

1:40

As the MLA for the constituency of Camrose I had the honour of attending and opening the Bruce Stampede last year. Bruce is not a large community, but they are always a fantastic host.

Rodeos are a major economic driver in Alberta and, in particular, in rural Alberta. While I have focused on the Bruce Stampede, rodeos happen all over my constituency every year, from the rodeos in Hardisty and Killam to the Sodbuster Rodeo in Tofield and the Camrose Spring Classic Rough Stock. They are synonymous with summer in rural Alberta.

Thank you to the stock growers, who raise their animals with a high level of care and love. Thank you to the rodeo association, who schedules and regulates the events; the local rodeo committee, who organizes the local events; the contestants, who make the event possible; and, of course, the fans, who make the event so much fun. I look forward to attending my next rodeo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Elder Abuse Awareness and Care Facilities

Ms Sigurdson: The United Nations' World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is recognized on June 15 each year. The purpose of this day is to shine the light on elder abuse. Sadly, here in Alberta we know that 9 per cent of seniors experience abuse. The prevalence is almost 1 per cent higher than the Canadian average. In addition, our seniors population is growing at a higher rate than the general population. We will have over a million seniors in our province by 2035, which means elder abuse could increase unless the government of Alberta acts.

Elder abuse occurs when an action or inaction jeopardizes the health or well-being of an older adult. Rates of abuse increase during crises. COVID-19 is our current crisis. We know that 77 per cent of the deaths due to COVID-19 have been in seniors' continuing care settings. Due to significant shortcomings in this sector seniors have died. These are preventable deaths.

When an issue is occurring in several settings, we know that this is a systemic failure. In fact, the abuser in the case of COVID-19 is the system. When the system abuses, it's known as the iatrogenic effect. So what are the concerns in the continuing care system? They include vulnerable workers, lack of PPE, low or insufficient regulatory standards, and a system focused on profit.

Let's take one of these effects and look deeper. The workers are paid low wages at multiple locations for extremely important, caring work. This pandemic has made clear how important their work is and how a system that relies on low-paid part-time workers is ill equipped to respond and address the virus containment. Often vulnerable workers are immigrants, mostly women, and the need to limit work to one location puts them at employment risk.

The government of Alberta has an important role in improving our continuing care system and ensuring that seniors are supported to live in dignity. Stopping elder abuse is paramount. The abuses of the system are the government's responsibility to alleviate.

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

Provincial Fiscal Position

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a challenging time around the world, in Canada, and indeed here in Alberta. The pain

we felt already from the triple whammy of the pandemic, oil price war, and economic crisis could very well pale in comparison to what we will face going forward.

The Premier told Albertans in his provincial address in April: “The end of the pandemic will not be the end of the economic downturn, the likes of which we have not seen since the 1930s.” That is a daunting, sobering statement, the potential for the worst economic downturn in 80 years, far greater than any in this Chamber have lived through and experienced.

Alberta’s circumstance is made worse by the fact that much of the province was suffering economically before the crisis. After treading water through the last five years, through economic stagnation and decline, things like the accelerated coal phase-out and the flight of investment capital coupled with the brutal realities faced by conventional and legacy oil and gas had left many main streets in small-town Alberta empty well before this crisis showed its face. Many Albertans were already in tough shape, and their situations have definitely not improved.

When we ran in the last election, this party campaigned on a 2.8 per cent spending reduction to the overall budget from the year previous. With this level of spending restraint, this government was on track to balance the budget in its first term while altering the unsustainable spending trajectory in many sectors.

We find ourselves in a very different situation today, unfortunately. I’ve listened to the opposition use words like “unconscionable” and “shameful” as this government has worked to rein in spending in a responsible, compassionate way. Going forward, the opposition, public employees, wage earners, the self-employed, every single Albertan in every demographic, in every sector, in every stage of life needs to understand that this government will have to make the very difficult decisions or this ship will run ashore, and then no government will have the necessary tools in the tool box and certainly no easy choices.

I’m forever an optimist in regard to Alberta’s future, but everyone had better buckle up.

Economic Relaunch and Personal Safety

Ms Hoffman: I know that Albertans are excited to feel a sense of normalcy as their favourite businesses, cultural centres, and outdoor spaces reopen. While I’m proud of the efforts that the public health officials and all Albertans have taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19, it’s important to remember that the virus is still a threat. Globally there have been more than 8 million cases and nearly half a million deaths. Canada is likely to pass 100,000 diagnosed cases this week, maybe even today.

So while we are all excited to have some increased opportunities to socialize, it’s important that we heed the advice of our public health officials, including Dr. Hinshaw. She has highlighted the benefit of wearing masks where a two-metre separation isn’t likely. I’ve received reports that some businesses have already distributed their publicly funded masks and are currently out. The government must remedy this and put together a long-term strategy to support Albertans in doing everything they can individually and collectively to combat COVID-19 until a vaccine is available.

Social interactions are an important part of our human experience. Working, contributing to society, and having a sense of purpose are fundamental. Students deserve quality educational experiences with peers and school staff, including classroom teachers. We all want to be able to return to a sense of normalcy, and to do that safely, we need this government to move swiftly and proactively.

Mr. Speaker, 100,000 Canadians with COVID: that’s almost the same population as the city of Red Deer. That’s a lot. So please remember Dr. Hinshaw’s advice: physical distance two metres or

more, wash and/or disinfect your hands frequently, and if you’re unable to distance, please wear a mask.

Thank you.

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

COVID-19 and Religious Observances

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this moment on behalf of all of my government colleagues to acknowledge the incredible work of our medical professionals at combatting the spread of COVID-19 and the overwhelming majority of Albertans who have followed the guidelines of our chief medical officer. We recognize that many Albertans have had to make sacrifices when it came to missing out on family dinners, events, or other ceremonies, and I want to thank everybody for their combined effort during these difficult times. Because of these efforts we were able to enter the second stage of our relaunch plan a week sooner than planned.

With public health measures and physical distancing in place, there will be no cap on the number of people who can attend religious gatherings. We’ve heard from Albertans of all faiths who, after months of social isolation, are eager to once again attend their houses of worship, houses of worship that contribute immensely to the fabric of our communities. Freedom of religion is at the very core of this province’s values, and it is why followers from all faiths continue to call Alberta home. Allowing churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, and all houses of worship to once again flourish is among the most important steps that we can take as a government towards a full relaunch.

For many, Mr. Speaker, religion provides a sense of belonging, safety, and security. It pains me to know that some of the members of the opposition have not yet condemned the antireligious rhetoric and those who continue to bash and insult the choices of religious Albertans. Our government will not stand for this as most members of our community are some of the most generous, kind-hearted, and altruistic people in our province. Whether you believe in the Islamic, Christian, Jewish, or any other faith, our government respects you and cherishes your contributions and beliefs.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 25 to be put on the Order Paper in my name as follows.

Be it resolved that

1. A Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to review
 - (a) the questions posed by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General in the document entitled Proposed Questions for a Review by a Standing or Special Committee, Sessional Paper 192/2020, and
 - (b) the Election Act, and
 - (c) the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act;
2. The committee consist of the following members: MLA Schow as chair, MLA Horner as deputy chair, MLA Allard, MLA Ceci, MLA Dang, MLA Goodridge, MLA Nixon – the one from Calgary-Klein – MLA Pancholi, MLA Rutherford, MLA Sigurdson from Highwood, MLA Smith, and MLA Sweet;
3. The committee may limit its review of the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act to

sections of those acts that the committee selects for consideration;

4. The committee continues despite a prorogation of a session and may without leave of the Assembly meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
5. Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertisement, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair;
6. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may utilize the services of employees of the Legislative Assembly Office or, with the concurrence of the head of a department or an officer of the Legislature, utilize the services of employees of the public service employed in the department or office;
7. The committee must submit a report to the assembly, first, on the questions posed by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General within four months after commencing its review of the matters referred in accordance with this motion, and, second, on its review of the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, including any amendments to the act recommended by the committee, within six months after commencing its review of the matters referred in accordance with this motion;
8. If the Assembly is not sitting at the time a report of the committee is completed, the chair of the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 38(1) and forwarding a copy to each member of the Legislative Assembly.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to provide oral notice of Bill 24, the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, sponsored by my colleague the Minister of Health and, lastly, oral notice of Bill 25, the Protecting Alberta Industry from Theft Act, 2020, sponsored by my colleague the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Oral Question Period

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

Fair Deal Panel Report

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's Fair Deal Panel report delivered exactly what we expected. The recommendations that are obvious have been under way for years, and the recommendations that improve Alberta's standing in Confederation are the things over which we have no authority. Then there are the things that no one recommended ever, things that are expensive and do nothing to make Albertans' lives better. To the Premier. The things Albertans need are security in their finances, in their job opportunities, in their health care, in their education. When will Albertans see actions on those recommendations?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that the Leader of the Opposition was the first Premier to lose after one election is because she did not understand that Albertans want a fair deal in the federation. They know that their economic and social opportunities are linked to that fight for fairness. They understand that our ability to develop and sell our resources, to develop our economy is dependent on that fair deal. Our ability to generate revenues that pay for social programs is dependent on that. That's why Albertans elected this government on a mandate to fight for that fair deal.

Today we took another step towards it with the release of the Fair Deal Panel report.

Ms Notley: The problem is that nothing in the report addresses the real issues that the Premier is actually talking about there.

Now, meanwhile we attended several of these fair deal sessions, and Albertans were clear. The last thing they wanted was this Premier interfering with their retirement. One man said that he didn't trust this Premier with his bingo winnings, let alone his pension. Right now people are focused on finding work. They want their kids to keep up in school. They're taking care of loved ones who are sick. Why is this Premier forcing them to drop everything and frantically campaign to save their retirement funds?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure that we know what the result would be if we asked Albertans if they want Justin Trudeau managing their pension savings. What we do know is that Quebec has successfully managed its own provincial pension program for six decades. I don't know why the NDP has such a low opinion of Alberta that they don't think that we can do successfully what Quebec has done for six decades. We have not made a decision on this. We're going to do an exhaustive study of the costs, benefits, and structure of a potential provincial pension plan, but, in principle, it could be a huge boon that would allow for better benefits at lower cost because of our young population.

Ms Notley: In principle, Albertans do not trust this Premier with anything to do with their retirement.

Now, the Premier struggles with the very concept of fairness. If he were really interested in fairness, he'd support struggling businesses; he'd stop fighting with doctors in the middle of a pandemic; he'd reverse his hikes on income tax, property tax, tuition, school fees, insurance premiums – you name it. Instead, this Premier is forcing special-needs kids to learn on their own with no support. Mr. Speaker, why does this Premier think he knows anything about a fair deal for Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again that question underscores how the NDP lives in a parallel universal reality. She talked about a series of tax hikes. There are none. To the contrary. This government has deferred nonresidential property tax payments, deferred taxes on employers, deferred WCB premiums. We're assuming half the cost of those payments. We have provided greater fiscal, economic, and financial support for Alberta families and employers than any province in the country has for their people. We're proud to have done so.

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

Ms Notley: Well, that statement is categorically untrue. Nonetheless, new topic.

Minimum Wage

Ms Notley: Our grocers, our couriers, our custodians, clerks, and care aides: Mr. Speaker, these are some of the Albertans who work long hours for low wages, yet when the pandemic struck, they were the people we relied on most. Even the Premier acknowledged that these folks don't get enough credit for the important role they play. But now we're hearing that their wages may be up for debate. To the Premier: will you commit in this House today in absolutely no uncertain terms that you will not roll back Alberta's minimum wage below \$15 per hour?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what – again, the NDP just invent things out of whole cloth.

What we know is this. We are dealing with a real unemployment rate – real unemployment rate – of something like 25 per cent, that we have not seen since the 1930s. Now, of course, we went into this already with one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country because of the NDP's job-killing policies. The Minister of Finance will be tabling the economic recovery strategy later this month, a bold plan that will do everything within our power to get this economy moving again, to protect jobs and livelihoods.

Ms Notley: It was an easy answer.

Before the election the Premier was unequivocal. "Rolling it back is a complete non-starter. No one is proposing to get rid of the minimum wage." Quote: promising hundreds of thousands of people that you're going to cut their wages is not the winning formula for an election. End quote. That's the Premier. Those are your words. All I'm asking is for you to say them again postelection. Will you commit to keeping the minimum wage at \$15 per hour? Yes or no?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what we will commit to doing is releasing the expert panel on the minimum wage hike of the NDP, which was a platform commitment. I suspect it's going to underscore that what the NDP did was to kill tens of thousands of jobs for vulnerable people, especially our youth and newest Albertans. Shame on them. In the midst of a recession, where they added fuel to the flames with their huge tax increases, they also killed tens of thousands of entry-level jobs. When will they finally apologize for what they did?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, when will the UCP apologize for lying to Albertans in the last provincial election about the minimum wage?

More than a quarter million working Albertans were raised up to \$15 per hour. These Albertans are not teenagers flipping burgers for pocket money. More than half are working adults with bills to pay, nearly two-thirds are women, and 40 per cent are parents raising kids. Premier, why, when we are facing economic adversity, would you go after those who earn the least, whose families are the most vulnerable? Are you that committed to protecting your wealthy, well-heeled insiders?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's the NDP, with its fiscal incompetence, its economic illiteracy, and its hard-heartedness that destroyed tens of thousands of entry-level jobs. That led to a youth jobs crisis, in particular. Before this crisis 25 per cent unemployment for Alberta men between the ages of 18 and 25. As an economist after economist after economist have demonstrated, that was in part because of their 50 per cent increase in wage costs in the middle of a job-killing recession. Shame on them. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition for her third set of questions.

Ms Notley: Going after the wages of the lowest paid Albertans while giving a \$4.7 billion corporate handout: that's cruel, that's unethical, that's not what Albertans voted for, Mr. Speaker.

Calgary Storm

Ms Notley: Now, yesterday I had the opportunity to visit Albertans in northeast Calgary hit hard by last week's hailstorm. Whole sides of houses ripped off, broken windows, shattered glass covering the street. The storm arrived without warning. The families I spoke to said that the experience was terrifying, Mr. Speaker. Our rough

estimates are that there could be more than 60,000 homes damaged and vehicles destroyed. To the Premier once again: will you declare this storm a disaster so Albertans who need it can have access to the relief they deserve?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: In response to the first question, Mr. Speaker, in fact, Albertans did vote for the job-creation tax cut, and the \$4.7 billion is a piece of NDP fiction.

With respect to the terrible hailstorms, Mr. Speaker, once again, our hearts go out to all of those who have been affected. I had a very productive conversation with Mayor Nenshi about this. I want to thank government MLAs who spent the last two or three days in their constituency offices helping people navigate their way through insurance claims. I can report that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is doing the necessary due diligence on whether or not to declare this a disaster. If that is their scientific advice, we will ratify that immediately.

Ms Notley: Well, here's what I heard when I was speaking to people yesterday. Many can't afford hail insurance, and some who have it are looking at huge deductibles. Many had just deinsured their cars because of COVID, and now they're totalled. They can't keep their houses dry right now without siding, but they can't get through to their insurance companies because demand is overwhelming, almost 60,000 houses impacted. The longer they wait, the more water damage is caused. These are real problems. When will this Premier step up with the help that tens of thousands of Calgarians desperately need now?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know, the Leader of the Opposition never fails to disappoint. When there is a tragedy, a crisis, or terrible losses, who is the first in line to try to generate fake headlines and to politicize it? Who is the first to try to exploit people's suffering for political purposes? The leader of the NDP. There were 15 major hailstorms in Alberta during her tenure as Premier, with massive property damage, and the NDP failed to declare a single one of them a disaster and provided no assistance. We're following the long-standing policy of Alberta in terms of disaster response.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's not politicization; it's political representation. That's my job, and, news flash, it's also the Premier's. Now, his new excuse is to say: oh, we've had other hailstorms. Here's the thing. There's a big difference between hail the size of grapes and hail the size of grapefruit. IBC pegged insurable damages in 2016 at \$50 million. Rough estimates for this one are 20 times that. Beyond insurance these Calgarians are going to need an extraordinary amount of help. Why is the Premier missing in action?

Mr. Kenney: What the NDP wants us to do is to break the law, which requires a scientific determination of a disaster. She wants us to ignore the advice of scientists in order to politicize a matter which she never politicized when she was Premier – namely, hail response – and in the process she apparently wants us to take billions of tax dollars to bail out big insurance companies in Toronto. No, we're not going to do that. They should pay up. They should insure the people who have been affected by this hailstorm.

Commercial Tenancies Protection

Member Ceci: Yesterday the UCP finally announced a commercial eviction ban. This should have been done weeks ago. The new UCP

plan was also supposed to fix a failed rent-relief program that this government engineered with Ottawa, but all it does is provide temporary deferred rent, forcing tenants who are struggling to make ends meet pay a massive bill in September. This isn't real relief; it's just delaying execution for so many entrepreneurs. To the Premier: when are you going to listen to businesses and provide actual rent relief, cash in hand that will help ensure the survival of entrepreneurs?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our province along with all provinces participates in the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. Our contribution to this is an estimated \$67 million. The program had some gaps. We heard businesses sharing that with us, so the other day we introduced the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act, which we're proud to introduce. It protects tenants from evictions, late fees, penalties, rent increases, and it also protects tenants and landlords by requiring that they enter into a payment plan that works for both parties and helps them be successful.

Member Ceci: Have you spent \$67 million? I don't think so.

Yesterday at the minister's press conference her answer to every problem, every scenario was that landlords and tenants should play nice and develop a plan together. She just said that. Premier, businesses are struggling. Because of the actions of this government, the program you developed with Ottawa, many new businesses don't qualify for any subsidy, and some landlords are choosing not to apply. Why are so many commercial tenants not getting financial support? How is this an effective strategy to prevent bankruptcy in the long run?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the members opposite, the members on this side have faith and trust in our tenants and landlords and our business and job creators to work together. We know that they know what's best to help them be successful.

The member opposite also talks about a lack of supports. Well, I'm not sure what he calls the billions of dollars in supports and deferrals that we announced early on, from small commercial utility deferrals, paying 50 per cent of WCB premiums, deferring education property taxes. That, in addition to the small-business grant that we announced, gives Alberta amongst the highest support of all provinces in the country for our job creators.

Member Ceci: If you count the pipeline.

While this UCP government spent the last month contemplating whether or not to put in an eviction ban, we were out talking to businesses. They told us they needed real relief, not just deferrals that will delay their inevitable bankruptcy without action by this government. We called for business grants, rent relief on utilities or reductions to insurance, and for this government to clue in and re-engineer their failed rent deferral program developed with Trudeau. To the Premier: if you can't fix your joint program with your best friend and biggest donor, Prime Minister Trudeau, will you step up and provide real financial relief to commercial tenants so they don't go bust in September?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said before and will say again, the best thing that we can do to help businesses is to help them open safely, under the advice of the chief medical officer of health, and provide them the supports that they need. Through Albertans' hard work we were able to move up stage 2 a week early. We have so many good-news stories from the BMO Centre and Calgary's expansion, the recent announcement from Lowes of a 1.2 million square-foot distribution centre, which is going to create jobs across a variety of industries.

Once again, we take no lessons from the members opposite on how to support our job creators. This side has supported them from day one.

Fair Deal Panel Report (continued)

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are frustrated. My constituents are frustrated. Frankly, their frustrations are justified. Alberta does not get a fair deal in Confederation. For all that our province has done to build up Canada, from our outsized economic contributions to the sons and daughters of Albertans who have served in the Canadian Forces and put their lives on the line to defend our country, we deserve a fair deal. To the Premier: now that you have the Fair Deal Panel report, can you tell us the strategy our government will pursue to get the fair deal Albertans are owed?

Mr. Kenney: Thank you to the member for his important question and for constantly raising the issue of Alberta's lack of fairness in the federation. This report – I want to thank the members for Banff-Kananaskis, Cypress-Medicine Hat, as well as Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for their tremendous work together with the other panelists. This is a great road map, Mr. Speaker, to move forward in asserting Alberta's role in the federation, beginning with fairness on fiscal transfers like equalization. This reinforces the call of every Premier in the country to lift the cap on the fiscal stabilization program immediately.

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

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier. Given that one of the primary grievances Albertans have is the unfair nature of Canada's equalization program and given that the Fair Deal Panel has recommended to hold a referendum on the removal of section 36, equalization, from the Canadian Constitution, to the Premier: can you tell Albertans what the government is going to do to reform equalization and comment on the prospective referendum on the elimination of the unfair equalization program?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we have accepted that recommendation of the Fair Deal Panel for a referendum on the principle of equalization, and I anticipate that vote will be held next year per our platform commitment. We told the federal government that this would happen if they did not listen to Albertans by repealing their attack on our energy industry, the no-more-pipelines law, Bill C-69, if they did not show fairness in terms of the equalization formula, if they did not, for example, fix the broken fiscal stabilization program, which is withholding billions of dollars that belong to the people of Alberta. They have failed to act, so we must take a lesson from Quebec and elevate our fight for fairness through a referendum, which we intend to do next year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and great answer, Premier. Given that a pressing concern of Albertans in rural communities is the prevalence of rural crime and given that the Fair Deal Panel has recommended the creation of an Alberta police service, one that is responsive and accountable exclusively to Albertans rather than to politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa, to the Premier: can you tell the House what work the province will be doing to examine this recommendation and the potential re-establishment of the Alberta provincial police?

2:10

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta had a provincial police force in its first 25 years, as Quebec and Ontario have had for decades. There are very real potential gains for Albertans to have a police service that reflects the people and values of this province, that is run in this province, that addresses our local and regional issues, particularly in rural Alberta and smaller communities, where the national police service is their local police service. That is why I have asked the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to lead a detailed analysis of the cost, benefits, and structure of a potential Alberta police force, with the report due early next year.

Rent Freeze and Eviction Ban End Date

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Health proudly proclaimed that the state of emergency in Alberta is lifted. Unfortunately, the economic state of emergency for many Albertans is not over. When this government lifted the state of emergency, the rent freeze was lifted as well, to the detriment of tenants across Alberta. To the minister: why was the rent freeze not extended when so many Albertans have not yet financially recovered from this pandemic? Was this an oversight, and will you extend it now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta has risen.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone in this House should know, our government brought forward significant supports for Albertans in this crisis to ensure that they had protections and that they could stay in their homes, and we're very proud of those supports that we brought forward. What we've seen is that landlords and tenants have been working together overwhelmingly and have found a path forward to navigate this crisis. You know, I'm pleased to update this House that the protections from eviction related to payment plans will persist until August 14. This gives Albertans time to get back on their feet. This is the right thing to do.

Mr. Carson: Given that many Albertans rely on CERB as their only source of income to support themselves and their family and cannot afford moving expenses and given that if they are evicted, they don't have savings for a security deposit at a new rental property and given that the UCP needs to rely on a massive handout from taxpayers to keep their own party offices open, to the minister: why do you think Albertans will be able to afford to pay increased rent or the cost of moving while the UCP needs a subsidy to keep their own office open?

Mr. Glubish: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, as has been highlighted in this House earlier today by my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, our government has led the country in an overwhelming response to support Albertans and Alberta businesses in this time of crisis. We're proud of the actions we've taken, and I'm proud of the actions we've taken to support Alberta renters and to support Alberta landlords to ensure they have the tools they need to find a path forward in this

challenging time. We know that the protections we have against evictions for not paying their rent will persist, as long as a payment plan is entered into and adhered to, until August 14.

Mr. Carson: Given that this government dragged their feet on eviction bans in the first place and given that the majority of Alberta landlords are empathetic but the Premier's hands-off approach of relying on landlords to do the right thing caused families and businesses to be evicted and given that members of his own caucus have tried to evict their tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic, to the minister: will you reinstate the rent freeze and the eviction ban, or will you admit you do not support economically vulnerable Albertans during this pandemic?

Mr. Glubish: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct the record. The eviction protections do continue until August 14, as I have said already in this House. I'd encourage the member opposite to listen to the answers, not just ask the questions.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we are focused on ensuring that Albertans have the tools they need to navigate this crisis. Our government's response has led the country, both in terms of the medical protections but also in terms of the economic response. We are putting Alberta in the best position possible to recover and to get back to normal. We're proud of the actions taken to date. We're listening to Albertans, and we are there to support them and protect them. We're doing our job, and we're proud of it.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, the government is inviting folks who've had their drivers' tests cancelled due to the pandemic to be able to rebook their tests, which means that two strangers can sit in a vehicle to conduct a driver's test, but it's still allegedly unsafe for biologists to go out and monitor our air, water, and land. When will the minister tell us why he really cancelled environmental monitoring requirements in the oil and gas industry?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment did not cancel any monitoring, but the AER did cancel some as they worked with companies to be able to put in safety protocols, PPE, and different things to be able to make sure people are safe, just like any other employer across the province. As we've gone into the second phase of our relaunch, we anticipate that the AER will continue to reduce the areas where they have lowered monitoring requirements and continue to work with companies to make sure employees are safe and the environment is being protected.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, yesterday a head of an environmental monitoring company said that he could have done this work safely during the pandemic. Given that this suspension is also impacting the business of many private-sector biologists and other related professionals, can the minister explain how he plans on saving those businesses from running into the ground due to these monitoring requirement suspensions, or is this just another casualty of the pandemic?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's getting really quite embarrassing that the environment critic for the NDP does not know the difference between the government and the Alberta Energy Regulator, but here is the reality. The AER is working with companies to put in safety protocols. Over the coming weeks we anticipate that we will be back up to full monitoring all across the province. It was only reduced by the AER by about 2 per cent, all monitoring that was considered nonessential for the moment, and had no major impact on important things like drinking water.

What's important is this. Alberta's environment is still being protected, and Albertans are still being protected. We know companies can work to keep their employees safe while monitoring the environment.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans rely on both public- and private-sector biologists and other related professionals to make sure that industry lives up to its environmental obligations and given that the suspension of environmental monitoring is exacerbating a brain drain that was already under way when this government was elected, can the minister tell this House how many biologists have to flee the province before he'll order the AER to resume environmental monitoring requirements?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's just completely ridiculous that as that member sits inside the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, with social distancing in place to help keep him safe, he would then not expect the same of our large oil companies inside the province, who have an obligation to work with their employees to keep them safe. Now, we've been able to do that while protecting the environment and continuing the scientific work that we do across the province. We'll continue to do that hard work, and we know that our industry cares about their employees. I trust that they'll be able to put in the requirements that they need to protect employees while protecting the environment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Provincial COVID-19 Related Assistance to Quebec

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's response to COVID-19 has been exemplary. The foresight of our health professionals has prepared Alberta for the worst, but now, with cautious, evidence-based optimism, we're on track to return to life as normal. Despite Alberta's frustrations at not acquiring a fair deal in the federation as of yet, Canadians know it's our ethical responsibility to help our neighbours in need. It is now clear that the government's decision to help Quebec and other provinces was the right call. Can the government please update the House on the distribution of PPE and ventilators to Quebec and how it has helped their efforts in combatting COVID-19?

Mr. Kenney: Well, I thank the member for his question. I think Albertans were proud that our public service was so well prepared for this pandemic. We had surplus stockpiles of personal protective equipment, ventilators, which we surged in part because of the excellent procurement relationships with major suppliers around the world. That's why we were able with confidence to share some of our surplus with our fellow Canadians in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia according to their needs and our capacity, including 25 ventilators to Quebec, millions of masks, hundreds of thousands of gloves, and so forth. I know that the people of Quebec appreciate that expression of solidarity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for his response. Given that COVID-19 hit Quebec particularly hard, much harder than Alberta, with over 50,000 confirmed cases and 5,000 deaths in comparison to Alberta's only 7,000 cases, with a higher rate of testing, and 150 deaths, meaning that Quebec had over 30 times more deaths than we did in Alberta, again to the Premier: what further action can Alberta undertake to help our Quebec confederates and other provinces throughout the nation in their response to COVID-19?

Mr. Kenney: Well, I thank the member for his question and his regard for our fellow Canadians in Quebec, who really have been one of the most hard hit jurisdictions in the world from this pandemic. The thousands of deaths that they have incurred are a terrible tragedy, and we express our solidarity with our fellow Canadians there and elsewhere, particularly Ontario, that's also been very hard hit. We're proud to have been able to share personal protective equipment and ventilators, but it's also important to point out that much of their health care system is funded thanks to the \$13 billion in equalization payments they receive from Ottawa, which are disproportionately provided by Alberta taxpayers.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Williams: Merci, M. le Président, encore une fois, et merci au Premier ministre pour sa réponse. Étant donné qu'il y a des milliers de francophones qui vivent dans ma circonscription et que l'Alberta a une longue histoire de francophones venant du Québec en quête de la prospérité économique et donné que nos deux provinces ont une longue relation forte entre nos secteurs pétroliers, forestiers, agricoles, et le secteur manufacturier, au Premier ministre encore: quel message avez-vous pour les Québécois et les francophones dans ma circonscription au sujet de cette relation spéciale?

The Speaker: I also understand that translations have been provided.

Mr. Kenney: M. le Président, je sais qu'il y a pas mal de commettants du député dans son comté qui ont les racines au Québec, qui sont des familles originairement du Québec, et j'imagine qu'ils s'inquiètent de la situation, de la crise de la pandémie de COVID-19 au Québec. C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles on a démontré la solidarité des Albertains envers les Canadiens au Québec avec l'équipement, avec les ventilateurs, et évidemment avec les transferts fiscaux importants qui viennent de cette province.

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

Government Appointments

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I proposed that the government set aside spaces on their new parole board for members of the black and indigenous communities. The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat commented that she had heard ideas like this before from a "certain group," and if the members of these certain groups don't find themselves on boards, she argued it's because they lack merit. This is a textbook justification for systemic racism. Will the Minister of Justice condemn her remarks?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, with respect to appointments on the Alberta parole board, if that legislation is passed by this House, it will be an open and transparent process. We're going to be looking for candidates that reflect the community as well as making sure that we're looking for candidates that can speak and advocate for their community.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at this. This is a member opposite for four years. Let's not take lessons from them on appointments. With their human rights tribunal they had people on there that donated over \$10,000 to the NDP. We have a situation where we have people that were donating maximum amounts and all of a sudden, like that, a judicial appointment.

Ms Ganley: Given that the member's argument suggests that if white men are overrepresented in leadership, it's only because they have more merit and given that people of colour are so massively

underrepresented in leadership positions in business, in government, in law, and across our society, does the Minister of Justice agree with the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat that the current system, where people of colour are underrepresented, is merit based?

Mr. Schweitzer: What I haven't heard from that member or any members opposite is an apology for the smear that they did on an indigenous appointee right now, Mr. Speaker, that we just made. They smeared an indigenous lawyer who's a leader in their community, and they refuse to apologize. That is shameful. We are going to continue to work with our communities. We're going to get this right. We're conducting a review right now of the Police Act. That member used to be the Justice minister and failed for four years to take action and to improve policing. This government is going to take action.

Ms Ganley: Given that indigenous people are just over 6 per cent of Alberta's population but make up almost half of Alberta's prison population and given that this has its roots in poverty, violence, and racism that Canadian and Alberta governments have imposed on these communities for generations, not a lack of merit, does the Minister of Justice really share the member's privileged view that this problem will fix itself magically on its own?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has the audacity to ask a question about respect for indigenous people when they won't apologize for the smear that the NDP did to an indigenous member that was recently appointed. That's shameful. Just this week I've spoken to every chief of police from a First Nation police force. We also started the outreach, with the help of the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, to indigenous leadership across this province to make sure that we can address racism, make sure that we can have a police force that addresses the concerns that have been brought forward by Albertans. We're taking action. Where were they for four years? They can do a study; we're taking action.

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

Policing and Racism Prevention

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was shocked to learn that the head of the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team doesn't see the value in collecting race-based data to help combat systemic racism. ASIRT is extremely important. It investigates serious injuries and deaths that involve officers. To the Minister of Justice. My question is simple. Do you agree with the head of ASIRT, or do you see value in collecting race-based data?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I can inform this House that I've already talked to every chief of police in the province of Alberta. We've also started the process of talking to indigenous leaders as well as groups across Alberta that have raised concerns regarding supervision of police misconduct. We're going to continue to improve this. This is part of our Police Act review, that we're doing right now. We look forward to bringing that forward in the future.

Mr. Sabir: Given that the RCMP incident involving Chief Allan Adam is being reviewed by ASIRT and ASIRT alone, despite calls for a more independent review, and given that indigenous leaders have said that the incident involving Chief Adam is one of the countless altercations between RCMP and members of the community and given that these leaders feel that their communities are unfairly targeted by law enforcement, to the Minister of Justice: what specific steps are you taking to address these concerns raised by

indigenous leaders and to improve law enforcement accountability, especially when dealing with marginalized communities?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, as Attorney General I can't speak to the specifics of the ASIRT review of that matter; however, I can comment. Racism is real. We're taking this issue very seriously. We're expediting work on the Police Act right now. These conversations are happening in real time. We're going to continue to engage to get this right. I'd encourage as well – the members opposite had four years to deal with the Police Act, four years to deal with police oversight. They did nothing. This government will act.

Mr. Sabir: Given that Naomi Sayers, an indigenous lawyer who focuses on human rights, said that it should be up to affected communities to decide whether racial data should be collected, not the police or ASIRT, and given that she said that by not collecting this data, ASIRT is, and I quote, actively involved in the erasure of those interactions, to the Minister: will you here and now condemn the position taken by the head of ASIRT and work with marginalized communities to identify how best to collect race-based data on police interactions?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I can inform this House right now that that work is going on right now. We're consulting with communities. We're going to make sure we deal with racism in our society. This is something we've heard loud and clear from Albertans. They want us to be thoughtful, they want us to get this right, and they want us to take action. We're expediting our review on the Police Act. We're going to get this done for Albertans.

Brain Injury

Mr. Yaseen: Mr. Speaker, June is national Brain Injury Awareness Month, which recognizes Canadians who are living with brain injuries and also helps to raise awareness. Acquired brain injuries are occurring in staggering numbers. Approximately 452 Canadians suffer a serious brain injury every day. That's almost 165,000 new cases each year, not including concussions, military injuries, or unreported cases. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: how do Alberta's rates of brain injuries compare to the national averages?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Brain injury is a leading cause of death and disability in Canadians under the age of 40, with approximately 1.5 million Canadians living with an acquired brain injury. In fact, nationally there are more new cases of brain injury each year than multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, HIV-AIDS, and breast cancer combined. In Alberta each year 5,000 individuals suffer from these injuries. This is a tragedy as we know that most brain injuries are preventable.

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a brain injury is a life-changing, devastating event for both the individual and their family and further given that our government was elected with a commitment to support all Albertans with disabilities to live a full life with dignity and equal opportunities, to the same minister: what supports does the government have in place to assist those whose lives are impacted by brain injuries?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

2:30

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you for that great question. Albertans with brain injuries can access supports from the Alberta brain injury initiative, which received \$5 million in funding from our government this year. The initiative helps survivors and families access support and community resources through a network of agencies across the province. For those who are unable to work or who need additional supports, AISH and other government programs are available. We will continue to work with community partners, advocates, and service providers to help Albertans with brain injuries return to work, learn new skills, and connect to opportunities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Brain Injury Canada estimates that nearly one person every three minutes has a serious brain injury, by these estimates in just the duration of today's question period 20 more Canadians will have suffered an acquired brain injury. Prevention is key to ensure that these tragic statistics do not continue. To the Minister of Health: what is your department doing to educate Albertans about the risk of brain injuries and prevention?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do need to do more to prevent brain injuries, and it starts, as the member says, with education. The ministry provides funding to the Alberta Injury Prevention Centre to do this work, and it includes a program called brain waves, which aims to reduce concussions among kids nine to 12. As well, AHS has education and prevention initiatives like the PARTY program for young people and partnerships with EMS and local school divisions to promote safety measures. They also work to educate new moms and families about the risks to newborns and children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Systemic Racism Prevention

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our caucus presented a motion to take action on systemic racism. I was the one to introduce this motion and was proud to do so on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Albertans demanding change. Sadly, the UCP did not allow it to proceed. They proposed their own watered-down motion that condemned racism but does nothing to create real change. To the Premier: will you sit down with me today to go over the motion so that we can insert vital pieces of it into the motion you intend to debate in the House in the coming days?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We will actually be bringing forth our motion. It is actually not a watered-down motion. It is a very strong motion that addresses racism. Our Premier has been ahead on the multiculturalism side of things for the entire time that he's been in politics. In fact, he has been to every corner of this country bringing people together, uniting culture, and understanding the extreme difficulties that happen for new Canadians and folks in this country. I'm very much looking forward to debating that motion in this Chamber.

Mr. Deol: Given that this UCP government's inaction is causing great concern for Albertans and given that I asked the Premier to establish a task force yesterday that included members of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, provincial indigenous leadership, and Black Lives Matter chapters of Alberta and given that the Premier ignored my request, will someone from the government please explain to these important groups now why they don't have standing with this government to address systemic racism?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I look forward to the debate in this House on the motion that this side of the aisle is putting forward. On issues of race we will not be lectured by the members opposite. Their stock in trade has always been to talk about it, but when it comes to taking concrete action, they disappear. You won't find them. So we will not be lectured by the Alberta NDP on racism. What they and their ally did last weekend was a typical example.

Ms Ganley: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that since it has made international news for all the wrong reasons with the injuries sustained by Chief Allan Adam during an RCMP arrest and given that this Premier knows the value of consultation given various existing panels he has established on other matters like insurance, human trafficking, and so on but given that he seems to have no interest in engaging with indigenous leaders about this incident involving Chief Adam, to the Premier, a yes or no answer: will you allow for the consultation to be part of the government motion to be debated in this House?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, as I've advised this House in numerous instances, we are expediting our review of the Police Act. As Attorney General I can't comment on the specifics of the Chief Allan Adam matter, but I can tell this House that we've already started the process to engage with indigenous leadership. We've already talked to all the chiefs of police that have First Nations policing. We're going to get this right. We're going to improve policing for Albertans. We've heard this loud and clear from Albertans.

Bill 22 Companies Act Amendments

Mr. Nielsen: Bill 22 is yet another giant omnibus piece of legislation brought forward during the pandemic, and after the associate minister's press conference many Albertans are still struggling to figure out elements of the government's policy agenda with this bill. To the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. I'd like to ask about the proposed elimination of division 3, part 6, of the Companies Act in its entirety. Can the minister explain why the entire division related to insider trading is being repealed and why it is in the public's best interest to do so?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to actually know that the member is really interested in red tape reduction. When that member was in government, on this side, they absolutely did nothing to reduce regulatory burden on our job creators and innovators. Bill 22 is 175 pages of getting out of the way of our job creators and our innovators, and we're really proud of what we're doing.

Mr. Nielsen: Given that many Albertans are confused about the government's intent when it comes to changes to the Companies Act, like division 4, part 6, of this act, related to the payment of dividends, which is proposed to be repealed in its entirety, and given that this would eliminate in law the prohibition that "no dividend shall be declared when the company is insolvent [or] if the dividend renders the company insolvent," can the associate minister explain why it's in the public interest to allow certain companies the ability to pay out dividends when they are insolvent or when such actions would make the company insolvent?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, again, the members opposite, when they had four years of being able to reduce regulatory burden – in fact, I brought forward a motion just to be able to stop the adding of red tape to our job creators and innovators and everyday Albertans. But these members, when they were in government, did absolutely nothing to reduce the regulatory burden. This bill is going to take care of a lot of red tape reduction.

Mr. Nielsen: Given that the filing of an honest and accurate prospectus is critical for organizations to raise capital and create trust in the marketplace and given that it is essential that promoters of a company act with integrity to protect investors against malfeasance and given that section 109 of the Companies Act enshrines in law liability for insiders and promoters if they provide an "untrue statement" in a prospectus, to the associate minister: why is it in the interest of shareholders to eliminate section 109 in the act, which limits the liability of insiders and promoters at their expense?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that my door is open for him to be able to come in and talk to me about any of these issues that are a concern to him, but the truth is that this member is trying to grandstand and be able to tell that he's doing something about red tape reduction. You never heard the members opposite talk about red tape reduction when they were four years in this government. We are doing something about it, and our job creators and innovators are very grateful for it.

The Speaker: My apologies to the Assembly. I believe I failed to note the point of order that was noted at 2:35 by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Up next, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Postsecondary Education Review

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday the Minister of Advanced Education announced the beginning of a comprehensive review of Alberta's postsecondary education system entitled Alberta 2030, transforming postsecondary education. To the Minister of Advanced Education: can you please tell the members of this House what the main objectives of this review are and how you will accomplish them?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. The objective of this review is quite simple. At its core the objective is to ensure that our students have the skills and education that they need to succeed in a modern economy. We'll achieve this through the review by addressing a number of important areas: first and foremost, by strengthening our understanding of the changing nature of work; and secondly, by building the skills that our students need, including cognitive, digital, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, our aim is to

strengthen the commercialization of research and build stronger relationships between . . .

2:40

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you to the minister. Given that you're undertaking the first comprehensive review of postsecondary education in over 10 years, that will have four main areas of focus – an assessment of global models and trends in postsecondary education, an assessment of Alberta's existing postsecondary model and governance, an assessment of individual institutions, and the development of an implementation road map by early 2021 – can you please explain to the members of the House what problems you are trying to solve?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the insightful question. One of the main problems that we will address in this review is the lack of strategic vision and the lack of direction for the postsecondary system. Unfortunately, the NDP had no vision for postsecondary education, and there were no clear goals or objectives for the system to strive towards. Alberta 2030 will clearly articulate sector-wide goals that we should all strive to achieve. We owe it to our students to ensure that there is clear vision and that we are all working together to achieve it.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you to the minister. Given that this review will undoubtedly involve input from key stakeholders like students, faculty, industry, and postsecondary leadership and given that this is an important opportunity to build a vibrant and resilient future through collaboration, can you please explain to the members of this House who you are going to consult with, and how will they be chosen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The member raises an important point. For this review to succeed and for the development of a new vision to succeed, it's essential that we do it in collaboration and in consultation with our stakeholders, and that is why this process will indeed include extensive collaboration with all postsecondary stakeholders and, furthermore, the broader community. We are building a robust engagement plan that will include a guiding coalition of stakeholders and build this new vision together.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the remainder of the Routine.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a document referencing a debate in the House that I engaged in on Bill 2 with respect to Australia's national parks and how they truly respect them and look to develop them in the future.

Secondly, with respect to Bill 15 I quoted extensively from a paper that was written by MacEwan University students Parliament and Bilyk regarding the development of alternative programs within the Edmonton public school board and how they led to charter schools. I table both documents. I have five copies available.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the requisite number of copies of a letter signed by Dr. Hinshaw arguing that either the federal government or the provincial government should put a ban on flavoured vaping products and institute a nicotine concentration cap at 20 milligrams per millilitre on all products. I have three tablings, actually. That was the first one.

The second one is an 18-page policy position paper by Alberta Health Services regarding vaping, and this position paper was developed under this Minister of Health and expressly calls for a ban on flavoured vaping products and a limit on nicotine concentration to stop big tobacco from getting people more addicted to their products.

Then the third tabling I was asked to table from the debate last night on Bill 19: I referenced an opinion editorial from the *Edmonton Journal*, Vaping Bill Fails to Protect Children and Youth. I have the requisite number of copies, and I'll put them on the table as I leave.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Awesome. Thank you very much.

Hon. members, we are at points of order, and the point of order from 2:35 has been withdrawn.

As such, we will now proceed to Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 4

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

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 4, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020, which proposes to implement a fixed budget period for the month of February.

This bill was tabled on February 27, the same day as Budget 2020, and was publicly announced through a news release that same day. Mr. Speaker, this amendment directly and beneficially affects all the organizations across the province that rely on our budget for their own financial planning. This will provide more continuity for Albertans and Alberta organizations that deliver services to Albertans. A budget period allows for all the benefits of a fixed budget date but provides flexibility to deal with unforeseen events. With a fixed budget period municipalities, school boards, community groups, nonprofits, and many other organizations across the province will have reliable information and sufficient time to prepare their own budgets. They'll also be able to make better long-term plans as there will be greater certainty around the provincial budget.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal for a fixed budget period stems from the recommendations of the MacKinnon panel on Alberta's finances. It also furthers our government's commitment to responsible fiscal management. This measure will enhance transparency, stability, and accountability in government reporting. I'd encourage all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Bill 4.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 21

Provincial Administrative Penalties Act

[Debate adjourned June 15: Ms Sigurdson speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has approximately four minutes remaining.

Ms Sigurdson: Four minutes remaining. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did rise earlier to discuss Bill 21, the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act, which looks at addressing impaired driving in a new way. I just want to reiterate that certainly the caucus of the Official Opposition very much wants to make sure that our roads are safe in this province. We want to make sure that there aren't drunk drivers on those roads and that Albertans aren't losing their lives from that, from anyone who is drunk driving, so we're certainly, you know, very concerned and want to make sure that that continues.

This bill does change sort of the first-offence situation, where it is – before, it used to be that they were charged right away as a criminal offence, and now there is some discretion by the, you know, attending officer. They can actually implement different kinds of penalties. Some of the feedback that we've heard, certainly, from the police force here in Edmonton: Dale McPhee, the chief of the Edmonton Police Service, talked positively about this change.

And I just want to remind the House, too, that this is sort of templated, this change in legislation, on the B.C. model, which actually was implemented back in 2010, so they've kind of been leaders in our country on this legislation. It's been understood that it's a positive move.

Certainly, the chief of the Edmonton Police Service said that all the chiefs in the Alberta association of police are in support of this bill, and they see it as a positive step forward. They think that it's going to free up some time, because that was one of the judgments of the previous legislation. It would take quite a bit of time for anyone working on that particular case, that file, you know, five to eight hours, and now they're thinking that it's just going to be one hour. Of course, time is always in limited supply, so it's good to be able to focus it and make sure that safety is implemented as quickly as possible. That creates more efficiencies.

2:50

We've also heard some challenges to the legislation in the media. The provincial criminal lawyers association has some concerns about the legislation. They are saying that this may give police too much power to implement different policies. Jordan Stuffco, the president of the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association, said that he's worried about the police not being held accountable and reported issues in British Columbia, which passed similar legislation.

There are kind of two minds on this legislation, and I think it's really important that we make sure that we understand fully the different stakeholders in it and make sure that we're understanding their concerns because, of course, that's how great legislation is made: you have a robust consultation with stakeholders, and you make sure that those voices are heard. These are key players, of course. The police service and, of course, the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association are very involved in that, yet they have varying viewpoints. So it's important that the government look at this legislation to understand that there is this kind of dichotomy in views.

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

Seeing none, anyone else wishing to join in debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Is he standing?

The Speaker: They just are being polite to me.

Mr. Eggen: Oh, okay. Great. I want to be fair and equal and just in my speaking order here and thus am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act. Indeed, this is, I believe, a very important piece of legislation, that has a lot of people talking, and certainly, I think, is a good chance for all of us to reflect on ways by which we can ensure the safety on the roads in the province of Alberta and, indeed, off roads as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We know that it is paramount to traffic safety and so forth to ensure that we are reducing or eliminating impaired driving in the broadest sense here in the province of Alberta. I think, to the credit of education and responsible reflection, that we have seen some reduction in overall statistics around impaired driving. Indeed, what I notice is that there is a generational change in attitude towards impaired driving, by which a lot more of our younger generation are categorically opposed and are very responsible in regard to impaired driving. I'm really gratified to see that, right? We see young people that just wouldn't think of that as an option, and I believe that that is as a result of long-term education and so forth that has been enacted here in the province of Alberta for more than a generation now.

It's important, I believe, always to have strict rules and penalties in place to act as a deterrent for individuals to refrain from even thinking about driving impaired. It's important as well for that notion to live inside people's heads so that, you know, they know that the deterrent is there, but they also know categorically why the deterrent is there and how this is still a serious issue that causes a lot of injury and pain and dysfunction in our society. It's, again, very timely to revisit this just to ensure that we are enforcing the best practices we have around the penalties regarding impaired driving and then perhaps look to augment that here moving forward.

I think it's been interesting to talk to different groups – right? – when we look at this issue and, certainly, look at other jurisdictions as well. We know that there have been cases to challenge impaired driving to do with alcohol, and it's important for us to always push back on these things because, of course, you know, we have had the .08 blood-alcohol level restriction in place for, as I say, a generation, and we've also had the 24-hour suspension aspect of our provincial law around for many, many, many years. As I say, we have seen some success, which is great.

My read on this bill – again, during second reading it's important to try to flesh out exactly where we're at, and if I'm making any error in this, I would be happy to stand corrected. It seems as though this is a change to administrative penalties that is similar to British Columbia and what they have had in place for a number of years. So if we want to look for ways by which to see how this might unfold, we can perhaps look to our neighbours next door to see how it's been going there.

My understanding of this, then, of Bill 21, is that it would decriminalize impaired driving somewhat because drivers won't be charged for failing a test with .08 for the first time, right? Then it dissolves as well the Alberta Transportation Safety Board and

issues a review committee within the department to develop administrative penalties.

You're supposed to have swift execution of this administrative penalty, within 30 days, and it will have a way by which you can pay the fine online. The notion here, that this will free up court time and make the roads safer: I can certainly see the latter being the case almost in a self-evident kind of way. You know, in moving a first-time offence for impaired driving out of the criminal justice system, then we would expect that it would reduce the amount of court time that is being used.

Making the roads safer? Again, the jury is out on that, at least in my mind. I just want to learn more during the course of this debate. It looks like, at first glance, that the British Columbia model did see a drop of significant incidents between 2011 and 2018 and a significant drop in fatalities, too, between that same time period, 2010-2018. I mean, if that does bear out in closer scrutiny, that is a remarkable statistic unto itself, right? A 36 per cent drop in convicted incidents of impaired driving and a 54 per cent reduction in fatalities: I mean, that's very significant information. I guess we should compare it against the reductions that we might have seen in our province without the same system, because I know that we have seen reductions in ours as well without making any change. As I said before, that's as a result of education and responsible behaviour.

This bill would have a fine of up to \$2,000 for that first infraction and would involve the seizure of a vehicle for 30 days, for a month. It seems as though there's a provision for mandatory education programs for repeat offenders, and there is an extended provision for the mandatory ignition interlock system used on repeat offenders as well.

3:00

Under the Criminal Code of Canada it's a criminal offence to operate a motor vehicle – right? – while impaired by alcohol or a drug or a combination of drugs and alcohol, and this includes the blood-alcohol content to be at or exceeding 80 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood, the .08 standard that we've seen around for, as I say, many, many years. The federal Bill C-46 made changes so that reasonable suspicion that a driver could be affected by alcohol would allow police to do a breathalyzer test. It used to be that you had to see other forms of evidence, of people not having good balance or slurring their speech and so forth, but under C-46 it was good enough to say that someone was violating traffic laws or they get stopped at a checkpoint and so forth. That was the standard.

You know, if we were to evaluate the essence of whether this is a good bill or a good change, I think that number one is if it does reduce traffic crashes and injury and fatality and if it reduces the incidence of impaired driving charges overall over a period of time. I think that injuries and fatalities to bystanders are something that we need to really consider as well because, of course, impaired driving has caused injury and death to other parties for a long time, and we know just how tragic and awful that really is. I know that my hon. colleague probably will have more to say about that presently.

You know, I'm trying to look through and see the differences. I think that reasonable grounds is one area that we need to analyze a little bit more closely, right? Of course, if the arresting officer is making the assertion of someone being impaired – it's a little more tricky, I believe, because there's a less definitive test for other drugs, especially with cannabis being legalized now. I mean, the alcohol breathalyzer test is pretty sound. There's some question sometimes around calibration of machines and maintenance of machines and stuff like that, but it's a pretty well-established test, a scientific test that has stood up in court for a long time.

The cannabis one, of course, is quite a bit different. We don't have the same level of testing. I mean, I guess you can do a blood test, but then, you know, I think that THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis, is retained in the bloodstream, in the body for quite a long time, for a couple of weeks or maybe even more, right? That could be problematic, too.

I guess what I'm getting at, Madam Speaker, is that when someone is arrested now and is charged with impaired driving, either with alcohol or other substances, then, you know, they have their day in court, so to speak. They can plead guilty or not. But if you remove that element, then you have the officer at the scene sort of fulfilling all of those functions – right? – making the arrest, giving the ticket, and that's that.

Again, I really just don't want, on one hand, to decrease the severity in people's minds of driving impaired. The notion, I think, for a lot of people that it's a criminal offence and that you will get a criminal record really is one of the big deterrents that keeps people not doing it. They will end up with a criminal record. On the other hand, though, of course, not having the chance to defend such a serious charge, again, puts it all on that situation when the officer is making an evaluation and if they're using a breathalyzer or whatever. That's the whole transaction, so to speak. You know, we just have to be very careful and cognizant of that element of it.

Of course, I don't want to reduce the severity of impaired driving in the psychology of Albertans – right? – by not having it as a criminal offence with a criminal record, but then we also want to make sure that we are not having some sense or some perception of injustice that takes place when it does become a ticket, at least at the first offence.

I think that, you know, there are ways by which we can help to mitigate both of those things by helping to educate people and to help people to understand still the relative severity of impaired driving – right? – not the least of which being the endangerment to the public that impaired driving does present. I think that there are ways by which we can certainly mitigate those things, and that is something that I would like to point out.

You know, the whole issue around cannabis – I mean, now it's changed, right? Cannabis has been legalized. I would like to ask the minister, at his convenience, to clarify what the position is around cannabis. Of course, if, as I said before, there is not distinct testing available for that, I just want to make sure that we understand that we're not sending a message that we're giving people a free ride to drive impaired with drugs but also, conversely, that we're not just leaving an open sort of area where an arresting officer has to make an evaluation without sufficient evidence or without enough to work with, so to speak, to make a sound judgment.

I believe the only other issue that I wanted to point out . . .

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for very thoughtful remarks on this really important and critical piece of legislation. I think we all have heard about impaired driving. It's quite possible that many of us do know people in our ridings who are impacted by impaired driving. Certainly, as their representatives and certainly as legislators it's our responsibility to take all steps needed and necessary to reduce impaired driving and to make sure that we're saving lives. There is no question about it.

As my colleague indicated, when we talk about impaired driving, there are a number of critical and important things that are at stake. Certainly, on one hand, we are looking at putting in place programs and policies that will help us save lives. At the same time, we are dealing, on the other hand, with people's rights in certain cases,

their Charter-protected rights, so we have to make sure that we're striking a balance that is the right balance, that is helping us reduce impaired driving, that is helping us save lives.

I was very much impressed by what the member mentioned about the legalization of cannabis and those other drugs that may or may not be readily tested on the roadside, and there are still processes being developed on how best to test people who are under the influence of those drugs. That certainly also raises questions. Sure, we do have tests established, tests for alcohol, but we may not have the tests that are equally efficient for cannabis and other drugs.

3:10

Certainly, we would be interested in knowing how this new model will impact. We'll consider these considerations and how this model will take into account those deficiencies in our testing capacity. We are still in the process of developing those tests, and we don't have sufficient data when it comes to cannabis-impaired driving to know how prevalent it is and how it impacts someone's ability. Prior to its legalization, it was illegal, I think, to smoke that, so we will not have that kind of solid data on cannabis driving. We certainly need to know, in the absence of sophisticated testing, how we will make sure that this model is capturing that in a way so that we are making our roads safe, so that we are saving lives in a way that respects people's democratic Charter rights as well and gives them a fair process that is expected of our laws, that is expected by citizens in a free and democratic country that respects people's individual rights.

Whenever those rights are in the way of some collective good, certainly people more often than not are willing to give up those rights, willing to accept some limitation on their individual liberties and freedoms in order to preserve the collective good. In this case, certainly we all want our roads to be safe. We don't want anyone to be a victim of impaired driving.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 21. Of course, as everyone in this House knows, we're not speaking about an abstract notion here. What we're talking about is a pretty serious affliction that we have in this province and across the country, globally as well, and governments have struggled to deal with the issue of impaired driving for many years. I know this government is attempting to make changes to legislation which will improve the lives of Albertans and make sure that we do what the bottom line is, and that is to save and prevent people from being killed and slaughtered on our highways and our roadways by impaired drivers, whether that be impairment by alcohol or other drugs.

As I say, Madam Speaker, this is not an abstract notion. It rubs very close to home. I know that my mother is watching right now because she knew that I'd be addressing this bill today. She's 85 years old, and her name is Ada. She knows every day, as she ages in retirement, that there's a place in her heart that aches for one of her sons, her third-born son, Kevin, who would have been 60 years old this year. Kevin was killed in a car accident in 1977, and that was caused by a drunk driver. He was attending Lakeland College in Vermilion, and he and three others in the car were going on the Grey Cup weekend to a hockey game in Mannville. An opposing vehicle crossed the line and had a head-on collision. Three people were killed in the car my brother was in, one maimed for life.

This is something that no family wants to go through, but it happens so many times in our province and across the country, and it's a deadly serious concern. You know, I know that it's a heart-

wrenching thing for everybody to go through, and there are so many families that have had to go through it.

You know, you think about what might have been, Madam Speaker. Kevin, who would have been 60 years old, was a graduating class president in 1977, in June of that year, at Queen Elizabeth composite high school. Very shortly after that, of course, he entered Lakeland College and wanted to be a park warden. One never knows, or one will never know what might have actually been, but I can imagine how he would have risen through the ranks. He probably would have had, you know, children and grandchildren now, and might have been in an executive position with our provincial or national parks system.

I'm sure he would have had plenty to say about what our current government is doing to emasculate our provincial park system by eliminating dozens of them and privatizing the rest, but that won't ever be, and there's not a week that goes by that members of our family aren't reminded of him and what might have been as he was the third of six in that family.

I wanted to bring it right home to the heart of the matter, Madam Speaker, as to what we are talking about when we talk to Bill 21. We're talking about families who are tragically torn apart. I'll never forget the night in November of 1977. Strangely, pretty much all the family was home. My grandparents were even out from British Columbia visiting, so they were there. At about 9 o'clock at night on a very cold November winter night the phone rang. Everybody in the house knew as soon as the phone rang that something was horrifically wrong, just knew. Of course, the call was from the hospital in Vermilion, and the doctor was telling us that my brother probably was not going to make it and to be prepared, gather the family together. He was coming by ambulance to the University hospital in Edmonton.

It just so happened that my father was at a community event helping in the kitchen. The Wellington Park Community League actually hosted a play every year as a fundraiser, and my parents were volunteers at the community. I volunteered to go and tell them. At the time I didn't have a car. I was 19 years old. I had to walk the kilometre from the house to the community hall, all the while trying to figure out how the heck I was going to tell my dad that his third-born son was probably not going to make it; he'd been in a bad accident and he was being transported by ambulance into Edmonton.

I walked into the hall, and as soon as I did, members of the community recognized, of course, right away that something was up. There was a hush that came over the crowd, and they directed me to my father, who was working in the kitchen. As soon as he saw me, he knew that something was up. I just told him in a quiet hallway exactly what was going on, and he was pretty stoic about it, but you could tell that he'd had a punch in the guts that he'd never fully recover from.

But we made it as a family, gathered people together, all that were in town, and went over to the University hospital and waited in what they called the quiet room, and we got the news not too long after my brother arrived that he had died of his injuries. We all as a family, the five surviving kids, my parents – with one exception; one brother wasn't able to attend – were allowed the opportunity to visit his bandaged body and see him just shortly after he passed, while his body was still warm. That's something you don't ever forget.

This is what we're talking about, Madam Speaker, the carnage on our highways, and it's not a momentary event in your life. It lasts forever. Your family feels it forever. The friends that they went to high school with remember it forever, and it's replicated thousands of times across this country every year. So when we're talking about changing the laws around impaired driving, it's certainly something

that catches my attention and that of members of my family. We, in fact, I think are of a number of minds even within the family as to what direction should be taken when we're talking about potentially decriminalizing the infraction, the impaired driving offence, and making instead an option for administrative penalties. I know there's been some evolution in the province already, away from instant charging at .08 to allowing a form of sanction at .05, and now we're looking at further changes.

3:20

One of the things that struck me right off the bat was that the initial reaction, Madam Speaker, to the bill from the journalism community and immediate tweets that came out right away was one of absolute confusion, suggesting that if you can figure it out, like, let us know. There is a lot of detail, and there's a lot of "if this, then that" type of a scenario within the legislation, which is somewhat confusing, especially layered on top of what we already have in this province, which is sort of a dual system of penalization already.

It's not without some concerns that I approach this piece of legislation. It's something that I think should be pretty clear to those families who already have suffered a loss, either a death or an injury of a loved one over the years, as we've seen the carnage mount, but also to those individuals who work in the field, whether it happens to be the legal system, the first responders, the legal system with respect to the prosecutors or defence lawyers, the people who are working in rehabilitation, those who are trying to get people back on their feet after horrific injuries caused by impaired drivers. There are thousands of people that are touched by the tentacles of impaired driving that have an interest in this legislation.

We're not talking about something here that is only of mild interest or passing interest or a very detailed piece of legislation that won't see the light of day and cause people to talk. This is something that hits home. The final result, of course, of the legislation is what most people would be interested in. But there's also the question of sort of dissolving the seriousness of the crime, and ensuring that the lives that are lost or the injuries that are caused don't get diminished in the attempt to change the legislation, to sort of water it down, the lives that were lost, the sacrifices that were made because of this carelessness.

When we look at the legislation, Madam Speaker, it attempts, I think, to justify some of the changes by saying that ultimately human behaviour responds to different triggers, that somebody getting their car taken away and being fined will maybe choose to not drive while impaired or under the influence of drugs versus a criminal charge, which may not be as much of a deterrent. Those arguments are ones that even my family listens to and wonders: all right; is this something that should be followed through on? Should we be looking at impaired driving legislation that has the end goal sought out by means that would be otherwise antithetical to what we would initially have thought in reaction to losing a loved one? You want somebody to pay the price for taking a life away so needlessly or for injuring somebody harshly for the rest of their life.

On the other hand, you want the behaviour to be curbed. There are a couple of schools of thought on that, Madam Speaker. As reflected in the legislation, the two angles ought to both be covered. As I said, even within my own family the hope is, of course, that people's behaviour is changed, that people decide to get a designated driver, that people decide that it's absolutely abhorrent that anybody would even think about getting behind the wheel after they've had alcohol or drugs in their system.

The question I often ask, Madam Speaker – somebody will say: "Well, I only had one, and that's all right. It puts me under .05." The question I ask them is: how many drinks would you like your airline pilot to have before they get into the cockpit? I think it's a

fair question. They're put in the responsible position of piloting an aircraft with people in their care, and the same thing when somebody is operating a motor vehicle: that individual bears a huge responsibility. My personal view is that we should have zero tolerance for alcohol or impairment while behind the wheel, and that's something that, you know, would perhaps be a difficult thing to implement in legislation.

I know that this bill attempts to get to the bottom of the problem and get impaired people off our highways and does so in a way that operates a two-pronged approach, where the individual's behaviour is perhaps curbed more by administrative penalties than it would be by criminal charges. I guess in the minds of those families like my own, who have suffered a horrendous, life-changing event caused by an impaired driver, the final result – if we see significant results in curbing the carnage on our highways as a result of changes proposed by Bill 21, then I think that that can be balanced off against the concerns that we have about the penalty not actually seeming to meet the crime and that the value of those lives lost isn't being recognized by the sanctions received.

As I'd said before, the bill itself is pretty detailed. It is, I think, a bit confusing even to those who are charged with reporting to the public about what proposed legislation we have, journalists and so forth. I'm concerned about some of the clarity and some of the complexities within the legislation, where if somebody has injured an individual or is involved in a criminal act while operating a motor vehicle while impaired, then all bets are off; you're getting charged under the Criminal Code.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I am so sorry for your family's loss.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and, as you indicated, I'm also sorry to hear about that loss. At the same time, I think it takes a huge amount of courage to get up after this long time, for decades go through the horror of that incident, go through all the details of that incident, and to share that with the public in a way that is not only meaningful to the member himself, his family but also meaningful to the debate here in the Legislature. I am certainly thankful to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for doing that, for standing up and for sharing those details.

At the same time, I'm also, I would say, proud to be working with a member like the one from Edmonton-McClung and many other members who do share their personal life, their stories, their personal life incidents in a way that helps us further the public policy debate here in this Legislature in a way that is real, in a way that is meaningful, and in a way that makes a real difference.

On that, I would ask the member – he was finishing up his thoughts. If he wants to continue, we will be grateful.

Mr. Dach: Thank you to the Member for Calgary-McCall for those kind words. I was going to mention another family member, who is my brother-in-law, in fact a retired member of the Mounted Police after a 25-year career, who of course was witness to many, many collisions, scenes that involved impaired drivers. I would say that conversations with him would lend themselves to probably criminal offences being charged at every instance.

3:30

You know, if indeed even the police forces saw that the legislation that is proposed here actually can be proven to reduce by a significant amount the carnage on our roads and change behaviour in such a way that people decide not to get behind the wheel while impaired, then I would think that even members of the police force,

who are operating, as my brother-in-law did for 25 years, on our highways in all seasons, on long weekends, and at holiday times, with all kinds of road conditions – yet still people would drive impaired. He would come across these horrific accident scenes and be the one who would have to go ahead and make that call or knock on somebody's door in the middle of the night to let them know some horrific news. Even the policing family, I think, would probably be willing to grant some leeway in the desire to make sure that the punishment meets the crime, so to say, by looking at the long-term effect of legislation, particularly these proposed changes, and granting that if the legislation actually reduces the carnage, changes behaviour in a significant way, they may be willing to look at alternate sanctions beyond the Criminal Code sanctions of driving .08 or over.

I know that the discretion that is given to police officers here in the proposed legislation is something of a concern to those who are looking at the civil rights angle of the proposed legislation, and especially in light of today's scrutiny that the police are going under, it's something that we should be looking at quite carefully and making sure that there is a balance that the policing authorities have in terms of their discretion about charging criminally or pursuing an administrative penalty at the scene. I know that there are concerns expressed by indigenous communities about perhaps their being overrepresented in the part of the population that might be directed towards criminal charges versus administrative penalties.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 21? The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With regard to Bill 21, the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act, and to my colleague from Edmonton-McClung for setting a context that in a way brings this home to me and others in this room . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. On second glance at our records, it appears that you have already spoken to Bill 21 in second reading.

Member Ceci: I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 21 on second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. You are also on my list of members that have spoken to Bill 21 in second reading.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21 in second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity. It's my pleasure to rise in the House to add to some of the comments on this bill. I will be a bit brief as it's in conflict with my other schedule.

I was looking at Bill 21, the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act. First of all, I'm happy. I just wanted to thank the government members for bringing this bill into the House. This is a very, I think, incredibly important matter not only for some people but for mostly all families, not only in Alberta but across Canada, and for the organizations really working to help stop fatalities due to impaired driving. I have been, you know, witness to some of the families that have lost their family members due to impaired driving. This is very critical.

I'm also happy to see that we have been, you know, adopting something that partially has been already applied in the neighbouring jurisdictions. There are organizations like MADD. They're people working in the province for a long, long time to provide awareness

and education on this issue so that this issue can be better tackled in this province. I understand and see their approval and their support for this bill, Bill 21.

Also, we're seeing in the proposal of this bill that when the government is trying to reduce impaired driving and fatalities for the people who run the risk of losing their family members due to unsafe driving conditions and unsafe roads, in a way the task they wanted to deal with, one of the focuses in this bill, I will say, is – this is how it's being proposed – not only to reduce the traffic fatalities due to impaired driving, but it will also probably save the costs in the justice system, the judiciary. That will definitely help speed up some of the processes and reduce the costs. If people are not being criminalized, they are not going to the courts. It will save courts time.

On the contrary, I have some issues. The professionals in this industry have been working very closely and very passionately. They're raising some of the concerns of human rights violations due to the great powers it is switching from the justice system to the police departments. Now the police will be able to hand out penalties and in a way stop people, and it is changing some of the mechanisms that the individuals involved had. They had some of the rights to, you know, challenge or appeal the decisions. They will not be there any longer.

I'm speaking to this point of view given the need of this issue, the urgency of this issue in light of how it is highlighted after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. We have seen the incident of the person that was not even an ordinary member of society. He was a chief of one of the very prominent reserves, a very important community. He was mishandled on a very minor case, and the accountability on those things is very important. That is my concern in this bill. I have questions and concerns for the Minister of Justice. If he can answer some of these questions: when this bill was being drafted, how were these impacted communities and groups consulted, and what were the results or recommendations from those groups?

3:40

You know, I belong to one of the minority communities in this country and in this province. I had another experience where I come from back home. I technically and really belonged to the majority of the community back home. Luckily, I would say that I was not in the view of the majority of the community back home and did not have the same view carry over. I would see that people of the majority community would not really understand the vulnerability of the minority communities, the issues and challenges they're facing. The issues and challenges they are facing are so emotional. How can they make improvements on the lives of the very individuals that are facing the barriers within communities?

When I immigrated to Canada, all of a sudden I became part of the minority community from the majority community. That is probably the very reason that I see the differences. I have the experience here. I will not say exactly if it was according to my community, but we are the people who belong to those communities. We just get judged more than anyone else, more than, I would say, the mainstream most of the time. I even remember when the then member of this House and the Leader of the Opposition Dr. Raj Pannu one time was elaborating on some of his intelligence and knowledge that he had about how to address the issue of poverty in this place, and then a member of the government bench just rose up and said: if you have this knowledge, go back to your country. We get judged.

I don't really want to make it about my own case every time I get up. We had an experience, like, two weeks ago, when 14,000 people were demonstrating outside the Legislature. There were kids. They

wanted to exercise support. The kids were Canadian born, Canadian raised but maybe a different colour, and they thought they were not allowed to enter the place because the people involved there judged them based on their race, based on their colour. I even tried to intervene. I tried to, you know, give a different perspective, tried to change the debate. They were learned young fellows. I know that three of them have university degrees. The other two were Grant MacEwan University students.

The other thing in this bill is that this bill will demolish or dissolve the Alberta Transportation Safety Board, and now it will establish the review committee within the department that will administer penalties for safer roads in Alberta. Given those experiences – they are not hundreds of years old. They were even big before. Things happen. I had a call from in my constituency. I don't know if that gentleman lives in my constituency or not. He was Canadian born, a highly educated person, but because he wears a turban, he's not allowed to get in the door without providing any reason. It just happened now.

I would urge that when you're doing this – if I could just provide some suggestions. If you can reflect, you know, on these kinds of issues, if there is a provision, then members on the committee can bring the direct personal experiences. I would not say that you will not use the merits, but if you will put your focus or emphasis on this when you are forming these kinds of review committees – please see that these things are still existing in our society. They are still going on. The minority communities like indigenous leadership can be a great source to provide these kinds of referrals for people, specifically Black Lives Matter, the Alberta chapters. A number of those qualified people belong to so many different communities of people of colour. I would ask to have representation on the review committee from all those communities if they can help to serve this purpose better.

That's all I wanted to say, Madam Speaker. I will summarize my comments with some of this additional information, and I may come back if given the chance. Next time I will add more into this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the time.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the comments. I think it's a really interesting debate this afternoon on this very important piece of legislation. As I have indicated, certainly, we can all agree on this, that we want our roads to be safe. There will be no disagreement. It's not a partisan issue. We can one hundred per cent agree on that. We can also agree that impaired driving certainly is a concern for road safety.

My colleague from Edmonton-McClung talked about his experience with this issue, and the way my other colleague from Edmonton-Meadows described this issue: I think that these are the real-life experiences that ground this piece of legislation in the everyday realities of everyday Albertans.

The way, I think, I was reading this legislation before, in my mind, it was that: okay; this administrative regime will make it more effective, will help us deal with impaired driving in a way that addresses road safety. However, after listening to my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, now I'm also thinking that it would be important if the Minister of Justice would be available to share the details of his consultation, of his conversations with those individuals who have lost their loved ones in impaired driving related incidents.

Clearly, I think – the Member for Edmonton-McClung can correct me if I am wrong, but I do not believe that even a member who sits among us who has lost his brother was even consulted, nor

his family was consulted, on this piece of legislation. When I was listening to him, it certainly brings a new – not a new perspective; certainly I thought about it, but I didn't see it through the eyes of those who are affected by this piece of legislation, that in their mind they might see this administrative regime not dealing with impaired driving but, rather, decriminalizing the whole thing, which is already criminal under the Criminal Code of Canada, but the way they are seeing it, it's a less stringent kind of penalty than those who actually have been affected by these incidents would like to be in place.

On the other hand, I think, my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows raised that there is a huge concern out there that there are sometimes common stereotypes, that members of certain communities may be more prone to doing that than others and that sometimes those things do come into play when it comes to law enforcement and all those things.

Now when we are looking at different aspects of systemic racism with respect to law enforcement – in particular, they've been highlighted after the death of George Floyd down in the States – we also need to think about this piece of legislation, our laws with respect to policing, that they change some powers that police have, that we need to think through the lens of systemic racism. We need to think it through by taking into account the perspective of ethnic communities, other communities.

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all of my hon. colleagues for their thoughtful interjections into this debate, and I especially want to thank my friend from Edmonton-McClung for sharing his family's personal story of tragedy with respect to drunk driving. I know that it's not easy to talk about these things publicly, and I appreciate the member's courage for speaking up about the very real human impact that drunk driving has had on his family. I thank the member for that.

I want to join all of my colleagues in saying that I agree with the overall goal of reducing drunk driving. This is a motherhood and apple pie statement, and like all members of the Assembly, I share the goal of reducing injuries and fatalities due to drunk driving in the province of Alberta, but I do have some questions, Madam Speaker, about this particular legislation with respect to whether or not this is the most effective way that the province of Alberta can be dealing with the issue of drunk driving.

I have questions that fall into three broad categories. The first questions are around the statistical data that the Minister of Justice has used as an argument in favour of implementing this piece of legislation. I have some questions around how this legislation protects Albertans' Charter rights. Then, finally, I have some questions around what other options the government has considered or is considering with respect to reducing drunk driving. Certainly, changing the penalty system that's in place is not the only option that's before the government with respect to reducing drunk driving, so I'm just going to ask some questions about what other measures the government has considered or is considering.

With respect to my first question, my first question is really around the statistical data that the Minister of Justice has used to justify the implementation of this legislation. When the legislation was announced, the Minister of Justice said that because a similar program is in place in B.C. and because B.C. has seen a 54 per cent reduction in alcohol-related driving incidents between 2011 and 2018, then that's proof that the model is working and that it makes sense to implement the model here in Alberta. I have a number of questions around the statistics with that, the first being that one of

the problems with the B.C. statistics being lifted out of context is that B.C. has actively refused to turn over their data with respect to alcohol-related fatalities and injuries to any third parties for review.

Madam Speaker, in this country we have a third-party organization that looks at all of the traffic safety related incidents collected by the provinces and submits them for review and then publishes a report based on that review. To my knowledge, it's been reported that B.C. has refused to turn over any of the data that's been collected since the time that this program has been in place for that kind of review. So if the Minister of Justice is telling us that it's such a successful program, I'm wondering if he's had the opportunity to get the data set from the province of British Columbia and submit that data set to a third-party review so that we can have confidence that what the province of B.C. is claiming to be true is actually true.

One of the other issues that I have with the statistics that have been presented to justify the implementation of this piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, is that referring only to what has happened in British Columbia with respect to the number of alcohol-related incidents: that discussion has taken place without putting it into the context of what's going on with alcohol-related incidents across the country.

Now, in Alberta we have had a roadside-suspension-like program in place since 2012, and, you know, I will note for those members who maybe haven't been paying attention to Alberta politics since 2012, at that time – but I'm looking at my friend here from Edmonton-North West – when that program was initially implemented in the province of Alberta, members of the Wildrose Party voted against it. I'm getting confirmation from my friend from Edmonton-North West, who was here at the time, that that was true. It's interesting, Madam Speaker, that members who are the inheritors of the Wildrose legacy have now all of a sudden changed their opinion on whether or not this immediate roadside suspension program has value. Certainly, a lot of the arguments that were true at the time, that they argued against voting for it, are still true now, yet they have somehow changed their opinion without adequately explaining why.

But back to the issue of the statistics, we've had in Alberta, as I've said, an immediate roadside suspension program, similar but not the same as B.C.'s program, and in that time we've also seen a significant reduction in alcohol-related fatalities here in Alberta. Now, it hasn't been as large. I think the numbers that I've seen show that in the same time that B.C. is claiming a 54 per cent reduction, Alberta has seen about a 45 per cent reduction in alcohol-related fatalities with the program that is currently in place.

Now, we can't compare apples to oranges, Madam Speaker, and this is why I'm questioning the data that has been used to justify it, because the data that's collected in Alberta with respect to alcohol-related incidents is not exactly the same as the data that's collected in British Columbia with respect to these incidents. There are differences in the types of data that are collected and how they're categorized and all of those kinds of things, and it's really important, therefore, that all of these data sets be made available to a third-party reviewer to be able to clean up the data, make sure that we're comparing like statistics, and then come up with some reasonable analysis of the different data sets to know whether or not we are comparing apples to apples.

It would be interesting, if the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General or anybody else on Executive Council has requested this kind of review of the data sets that are available from the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, to see if we've actually seen a comparable reduction in alcohol-related fatalities and incidents in Alberta due to the program that is currently in place and that the government is changing.

It's also interesting, Madam Speaker, to look at other jurisdictions that haven't had a roadside suspension program in place at all. It was reported that Manitoba and Quebec have also seen similar reductions in alcohol-related incidents and fatalities in those provinces over the time period of 2010 to 2018, approximately. They've seen reductions in the order of 40 to 45 per cent of alcohol-related incidents and fatalities, and they don't have an immediate roadside suspension program at all in those jurisdictions. So I would be interested to know what's going on in those jurisdictions where they don't have a roadside suspension program at all. Why are they seeing reductions in alcohol-related fatalities, too? That will come back to my third point around what the government is considering in addition to implementing this legislation.

4:00

Certainly, to summarize my first question, the statistical data that is used to backstop this argument that the roadside suspension program has been successful in reducing fatalities: does that argument hold water? The only way we can know is if we look at all of the data sets that are collected by all of the provinces, submit them to a third-party review, and have some kind of report submitted to us for us to be able to review it. I would hope that the Minister of Justice or somebody on the Executive Council has done that work and would be able to provide all members of the Legislature some kind of summary of that review so that we can make an informed decision when we decide how to vote.

I certainly have heard a number of stakeholders in my constituency raise the issue on how this proposed legislation protects our Charter rights. There are certainly some questions as to whether or not this immediate roadside suspension program that's being proposed adequately protects the Charter rights that every Albertan is guaranteed. A number of people have pointed to the fact that these decisions will be made by an administrative tribunal. The decisions as to guilt, if they are challenged, will be reviewed by an administrative panel and not a court of law, and the timelines for requesting these kinds of reviews are incredibly short. The Minister of Justice is proposing that if you are caught and you've been assigned a penalty under this proposed legislation, you have seven days to file a review, and then a decision must be rendered in 30 days.

I don't have any problem with the efficient and expedient carrying out of justice. In fact, I strongly believe that justice delayed is justice denied, so I'm in favour of making sure that everybody has a chance to have their day in court as quickly as possible. However, I've been told by stakeholders in my constituency that a seven-day appeal time is not workable, that it's very difficult to contact a lawyer and retain his or her services in order to represent you at this kind of administrative tribunal within that seven-day period. Most of the lawyers who are working in this field are incredibly busy people, and they just do not have the time in their schedules to respond so quickly to these issues.

I think it's a fundamental principle of justice that everybody who is charged with a crime or accused of committing some kind of offence and administered a penalty has the right to defend themselves in front of the appropriate court. If the timelines implemented are so quick that you can't adequately prepare a defence for yourself, I have some concerns around whether or not that violates the Charter rights that are available to Albertans, and I would hope that the Minister of Justice or somebody from Executive Council can effectively answer that question.

Furthermore, I also have a question as to whether or not this administrative tribunal that the government is proposing is the adequate body for oversight over these kinds of decisions. Certainly, as it stands, if you want to challenge the administration of a criminal penalty or something related to that, you have the right to have that

decision reviewed in a court of law. I would strongly urge the Minister of Justice to tell us if there is definitely going to be the opportunity for people who are accused of committing these kinds of offences to have the assessment of these penalties reviewed by a court of law just to make sure that they've been treated fairly, that their Charter rights haven't been violated in any way, and that, in fact, the penalty was assessed fairly. That is a fundamental freedom that every Canadian enjoys, and I would hope that the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General can tell us whether or not this legislation as proposed does in fact protect those Charter rights.

My final question to members opposite is: what else is the government considering to do with respect to reducing drunk driving in the province of Alberta, Madam Speaker? You know, the proposal before us changes the powers that are available to police to assign these kinds of penalties, but it is very much focused on a catch-and-prosecute model. We are relying here on police to act as a deterrent to drunk driving, which, you know, is certainly a way to reduce drunk driving in the province of Alberta, but I'm wondering if it's the most effective way.

Certainly, as a result of the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States . . .

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar always has really scientific and calculated things to add to the debate and brought in really good arguments with respect to the reliability of data, with respect to the Charter rights, and he was about to start saying something about the BLM movement, about how that relates to this particular piece of legislation. I would be interested in knowing whatever he was contemplating to share. I will give my colleague an opportunity to continue with it.

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

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank my friend from Calgary-McCall for asking me that question. One of the issues that the Black Lives Matter movement has put forward is the suggestion that maybe we should look at what else we can do to promote public safety in addition to funding the police. Certainly, the Black Lives Matter movement here in Alberta has put forward that access to public transit, free public transit, would probably be a significant public safety initiative. I would certainly ask the government that question, whether or not they've looked at the possibility of expanding public transit services all across Alberta to reduce the incidents of drunk driving.

Certainly, some of the studies that have been conducted – and most of them in the United States, Madam Speaker – have indicated that where bars and restaurants are located within walking distance of a transit stop of any kind, whether that's bus or light rail, incidents of drunk driving go down significantly. Now, you know, I won't claim that that data would hold true here in Canada, but the fact is that I couldn't find any reliable data on that question. I would like to ask the government if they've looked at the possibility of funding additional public transit across the province of Alberta to make sure that people have the option to leave their vehicles at home when they go out and decide to have a drink.

You know, it's certainly interesting that here in the city of Edmonton buses close down at approximately 1:30 in the morning, and last call isn't until 2, so there's a disconnect there. I'm just wondering if even funding public transportation so that the hours of public transit could be expanded on existing routes might have a positive impact on reducing the number of alcohol-related incidents

in the province of Alberta. More than that, Madam Speaker, I'm sure that all members would agree that public transportation in Alberta is severely lacking. It is very difficult to make it around certainly the city of Edmonton on public transportation even at the times when buses are running most frequently, much less at 2 o'clock in the morning, when bars are closed.

4:10

I'm wondering if the government has looked at the possibility of funding municipalities so that they could improve access to public transit, enhance the number of bus routes that are available, spend more money on light rail transit in our major centres. You know, I think one of the common responses that we get from rural members is that we don't have public transportation in rural Alberta. My question is: why not? Why don't we spend the money on public transportation in rural Alberta as we do in urban Alberta?

[The Speaker in the chair]

Thank you to my friend from Calgary-McCall for that question. I certainly hope that the government is considering the possibility of expanding public transit in the province of Alberta as another way to reduce incidents of alcohol-related driving, and I urge members to consider that when they're considering how we can get rid of the problem of drunk driving here in the province of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are approximately 30 seconds left under 29(2)(a) if anyone else has a brief question or a comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 21, Provincial Administrative Penalties Act, in second reading, I believe it is. You know, I apologize ahead of time. I likely will repeat a number of the points that my colleagues have brought up, but I think they're worth repeating, certainly. I think I've spoken to this already, but, again, just to reiterate that we do, of course, support reducing impaired driving and doing everything that we can to save lives, without question. That's actually simple. I think all of us in this House would agree.

However, this bill will affect how many decisions by the police and the justice system are reviewed. I think that we've gone over that a number of times. I think that, you know, recently – I'm sorry; I'm late joining the debate today – we've all come to know that we can do a better job in policing, and I think that's true in any field. I certainly have a lot of respect for law enforcement in Alberta and in Canada for the important work that they do, but there's always room for improvement, just like any sector, just like any profession, just like all of us. I think we all fall into that category as well, that we can all do better.

I do believe that one of the things that has been said a number of times by my colleagues is that, you know, it's not a bad idea to stop and think about it and to do everything you can to consult. No government is perfect. No consultation is ever perfect. I think everybody has learned that. Everybody has learned or come to know the importance of consultation and truly how vital it is to get it right. That doesn't mean that you're always going to please everybody, that everybody is going to agree with you, but there is a very big difference between doing a thorough consultation and just looking for people to agree with you. I do think it's important to take the time to get that right, particularly for an issue like this.

You know, some of the questions my colleagues have raised I'd again like to reiterate. I don't believe that we've had any clarity or more clarity on these questions, so it is my hope that the government

members or ministers responsible for this piece of legislation will be able to provide more clarity. Obviously, we all saw a number of changes with respect to cannabis in Canada and, of course, in Alberta. I think it was a lot of work to ensure that we addressed all the questions and concerns that came along with that. I think probably they're still popping up and we're still dealing with them, but I think we need more clarity about: how will this work with cannabis and, of course, other drugs? Perhaps we can get more clarity from the minister about how that's going to work. We know testing exists, but it is newer, so any additional details will be appreciated.

Currently there are concerns about people that are not physically able to blow into a testing device, such as people with heavy asthma or certain cancers. Obviously, you know, one of the things that is left out is that, believe it or not, there are a number of Alberta drivers, I'm sure in Canada as well, that have physical disabilities, so they've had their vehicles adapted, whether that's hand controls to manage braking and gas and all of those things. Certainly, there are lifts and other equipment that they use to get into the driver's seat. There are actually kind of amazing adaptations on vehicles, I might add. But it would be particularly tough for those folks to even be able to participate in this kind of roadside test.

What are the adaptations? Has that been considered? You know, perhaps even taking a little time to consult with groups that would have some expertise around adaptive driving or adaptive vehicles. I know right here in the capital region – I'm pretty sure they still do it – the Glenrose hospital actually used to run adaptive driving lessons and actually did teach driving with adaptive vehicles. I think at one time they even had their own vehicle for people to learn on. Of course, they're simulations. But that would be quite useful.

Now, one of the things I did hear in one of the last debates that I was in the Chamber for on this particular bill was the government members talking about the statistics coming from British Columbia or the model that was used in British Columbia. I think it would be really quite helpful to have more information about that. You know, I think that when you're looking at statistics and models, of course, there are always pros and cons, what's working and what's not, so perhaps a bit of a deeper dive into that.

Now, some of the things that we have heard from the UCP members as they have risen to speak to this bill is that this piece of legislation will make roads safer and free up court time. I don't think any of us would disagree that if, in fact, this bill specifically did that, made roads safer and saved lives and freed up court time in the process, that would certainly be a good thing.

But going back to what I heard just as I popped in here, you know, one of the things that my colleague was talking about – and I'm going to make a bit of a stretch here – was public transportation. I do think that it's important to address issues around safety on the roads by doing everything we can, first of all, to educate people about the dangers of impaired driving, to prevent it, and then to have things in place to deal with people who choose to break the law. At the same time, I think it's important to invest in other modes of transportation. Public transportation is an amazing investment.

Yesterday was kind of a landmark day for the city of Calgary. Based on what I read, this has been in the works for many years. I think that, certainly, it's a big investment. To take a city into the future, a future that understands the importance of public transportation and investments in this kind of infrastructure: you know, that's a really great thing.

I'm going to give a little perspective. I'm not saying that there is impaired driving because of this, but, you know, there is a potential risk. As many of you know, the city of St. Albert is very close to the city of Edmonton. Actually, there are parts where you could probably just take a few steps and cross the border from St. Albert

and be in Edmonton. One of the big problems is that a lot of people who live in St. Albert do use their vehicles. Let's say that they're going to a play or a restaurant or to a bar or whatever in the city of Edmonton from St. Albert. I don't really know why they'd do that because there's really great entertainment and restaurants in St. Albert; but let's say that they do. There isn't a lot of public transportation that connects the two. There is a commuter bus that, I understand, runs during peak hours. But if you have any kind of disability or if you are a senior who doesn't drive anymore, you are relying on public transportation, and especially if you need accessible transportation, it's extremely limited. It's limited to peak hours, and it's actually limited to only a few destinations in Edmonton from St. Albert. That's a really good example, a local example about why people get into their vehicles as opposed to using public transportation.

If there is a possibility that maybe they have had too much to drink or consumed cannabis or whatever other drug they may have – I don't know – elected to consume or whatever, I think that there are very real things that we can do, in addition to looking at legislation and other models, that could potentially prevent this problem. I do think that investments in public transportation are essential.

4:20

Some of the other arguments that we've heard from government – again, I mentioned that this is based on a B.C. model which reduced rates of impaired driving incidents. They dropped by 36 per cent from 2011 to 2018, and the number of impaired fatalities fell by 54 per cent from 2010 to 2018, which is great. I think that any time we can save a life or prevent any kind of injury is great. I mean, anything that we can do to prevent that is good.

However, I do think, just based on a quick scan of some of the trends in Canada – and I would give you more specific examples of provinces, but I'm sorry; I don't have my notes – on the whole, Canadians, Albertans, British Columbians have done a fairly good job of educating the public about the dangers and the risks of impaired driving, whether it's alcohol or cannabis or whatever it is. I think that there are likely some other variables involved in the statistics that are being cited, so it would maybe be a really good thing to stop and look at those other variables to ensure that this legislation is doing everything that the government would like it to do, doing everything that we can to keep people safe.

One of the organizations supporting this piece of legislation is Mothers Against Drunk Driving. I'm sure that there are others. As a mom myself, you know, I just know that anything that we can do to keep my own kids, everybody's kids, everybody safe on the road is a good thing. However, to simply point to one program as being the sole source of the reduction of harm in terms of injury or death – I think it would be wise for us to spend the time to look at what are the other variables to make sure that we catch everything.

One of the things that the government argues that this bill, this piece of legislation, will do is introduce tough penalties: fines of up to \$2,000, increasing the length of vehicle seizure from three days to 30 days, new mandatory education programs for repeat offenders – of course, education is never a bad thing – and new longer periods of mandatory ignition interlock, especially for impaired drivers. You know, all of those things seem to be very good ideas. Anything that we can do to reduce the number of impaired drivers on the road, decrease the number of injuries or fatalities is a good thing.

I'm just going to go over some key facts. Under the Criminal Code of Canada it is a criminal offence to operate a motor vehicle, whether in motion or not, while impaired by alcohol, a drug, or a combination of the two. This includes operating a motor vehicle with a blood-alcohol content equal to or exceeding 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood or operating a motor vehicle

with a blood-drug concentration equal to or exceeding a prescribed value. Equal concentrations are defined in the blood-drug concentration regulations.

One thing I also wanted to add. This was done a number of years ago and, I think, likely had some unintended consequences and some maybe unintended benefits. For all of us that are parents that have had our kids forced to have a driver's licence that has quite a few limitations around them, I actually think it's a good idea. I can remember some of the debate when those rules were changed, and I can remember some of the alarm or some of the worry about what it would do. As a mom, just my own personal opinion, I actually quite appreciated that. When my kids were driving and, of course, borrowing the vehicle all the time and wanting to stay out late, they were limited as to what they could do. They could not stay out after certain hours. They certainly learned at the beginning of their driving careers that there was zero tolerance for any kind of impaired driving; not even a sip. I think that that has been a really good way for them to start their driving career. So that's just an example.

Going back to some of the key facts and figures, the federal Bill C-46 made changes to what reasonable suspicion that a driver affected by alcohol is, which allows the police to conduct a breathalyzer test. It used to be more that the driver had to show signs of drinking alcohol such as, you know, slurred speech, those kinds of things. Under C-46 it was sufficient if they were violating traffic laws or stopped at a checkstop. Alberta had a different model of administrative penalties.

Going back a little bit to the B.C. model that is touted quite a bit in this place, just a little bit of background information for people riveted to this debate. That came into effect in 2010. If a driver has .05 per cent or more blood-alcohol content, then they can be served with immediate roadside prohibition.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my friend from St. Albert for her thoughtful comments on Bill 21. I believe she raised some important considerations that we should all keep in mind while considering this legislation. I have long appreciated my friend from St. Albert's passionate defence of the disabled community, and I think she raised some interesting questions with respect to how this proposed legislation would potentially impact members of the disabled community.

I'd like her in this time to maybe talk about what kind of accommodations she thinks we could make to members of the disabled community to make it easier for them to not have to drive at all. We talked a little bit about the fact that public transportation between the city of St. Albert and the city of Edmonton isn't exactly ideal. She spoke quite a bit about the problems that her constituents have when it comes to travelling back and forth between Edmonton and St. Albert and choosing whether or not they should drive to make that trip. I'm wondering if she could maybe provide more comment on what factors people in the disabled community have to consider when they consider whether or not public transportation is an option for them and what kind of improvements she would like to see so that members of the disabled community are better able to choose public transit as an option rather than getting behind the wheel.

Thank you.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I'm always happy to chat about St. Albert and chat about disability issues, actually. It is true that St. Albert

has terrific public transportation within St. Albert. The problem is that we don't have great connections other than the commuter lines between St. Albert and Edmonton. A lot of people – and I can't remember the statistics – who live in St. Albert, who call St. Albert home, actually work in Edmonton. Actually, there's a huge number of public-sector workers that live in St. Albert and commute to Edmonton to work. Apart from the greenhouse gas emissions with that amount of transportation, there's a cost to it as well. I think that an investment in public transportation between these communities – and not just St. Albert. Likely the same is true for some of the other surrounding communities around large cities like Edmonton and Calgary.

I know that a couple of years ago – I think it was two years ago, now – when we were in government, we made a commitment and funded, actually, a future LRT stop right in St. Albert, right on St. Albert Trail. There were a lot of problems with the previous bus hub. Parking was awful. It was difficult for connections. So we made that investment, and construction happened. It's well on its way. Certainly, it's a big hub for buses, so that's where people go. They're able to park. But the real beauty of that is that it is hoped and planned that that will be a future LRT stop. LRT: an investment in infrastructure. Imagine that.

4:30

This is a future vision, right? This is a future vision for an area, not just the municipality of St. Albert and the city of Edmonton. This is an entire capital region being connected and moving people efficiently while respecting all of the other challenges that investments in public transportation meet. That was our investment because I think, as the forward-looking government that we were, we saw the need to make these investments to move us ahead, to address all kinds of issues, some of which are related to climate change, some of which are, you know: what are the jobs of the future, and where are people going to go?

That was an investment we made. But we also made it because we understand that there is a big chunk of our community, in all of our communities, that requires public transportation for various reasons, whether they can't afford a vehicle, they don't have access to a vehicle, or they choose not to drive for whatever reason. Perhaps it's a disability. There are a lot of folks with disabilities that are just simply unable to drive. Perhaps they have not been seizure-free long enough. There are some, you know, very strict rules, and rightly so, that people with seizure disorders have to prove that they're seizure-free for an amount of time before they can resume driving. Now, maybe for whatever reason, their medication or disability, they just choose not to do that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, under Standing Order 29(2)(a) you're unable to adjourn debate even if you had gotten it in before the buzzer, so not to worry.

Mr. Eggen: Instant replay.

The Speaker: That's exactly right. Let's break out the *Hansard* replay and find out exactly what happened there. Good point from the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

It appears that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore perhaps wants to adjourn debate or continue the debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. Just a couple of really quick comments here. You know, with my background in labour I'm always, of course, looking at the language of a bill, what's being said. Certainly, Bill 21 is a very, very complex piece of legislation, and given that we're talking

about impaired driving – and it's funny. At the risk of dating myself here a little bit, I remember when we used to use terms such as “drunk driving,” which evolved into “impaired driving,” and now we start throwing cannabis use into that. It's a little bit interesting how that's evolved.

Anyway, because of the subject matter, you know, I looked at this as best I could, because I'm not exactly very well versed in this area. How can we make sure that all of our i's are dotted, that all of our t's are crossed so that we have a piece of legislation that not only works in terms of fairness so that we're not potentially setting ourselves up, allowing loopholes but also to make sure that it's interpreted easily, simply, and that there's never any confusion about that.

I have listened very, very intently during this debate, and I think that as we move forward in other sections of debate, we'll get a chance to have a very fulsome conversation about that. Hopefully, members of the government will be able to provide some guidance to some of my questions that I'll be bringing forward later and help me to fully understand, to make sure that we've got a really good, solid piece of legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

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

[Adjourned debate June 17: Mr. Toews]

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there those wishing to join in the debate on Bill 4 this evening? I see the hon. the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Ms. Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 4 in third reading and to outline in quasi-summary form why it is our caucus will not be able to support this bill. Now, you know, just for the purposes of review, it's a fairly thin bill. There's not a great deal of substance to it. It's titled the Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020, and implicit in that, I guess, is the notion that what it does is that it allows for greater planning and greater transparency.

Typically, when we support bills, one of the things we like to do is make sure that the substance of the bill matches the title of the bill. In this case, we would argue that it does not, that in fact this bill does nothing to promote greater planning, nor does it do anything to promote greater transparency. I suppose one could argue that if they retitled it the Fiscal Failure to Plan and Provide Less Transparency Bill, in principle we could vote for it because at least the title would match the substance, but given that we wouldn't actually support that substance either, we would also be compelled to vote against it.

To determine whether the substance of the bill actually achieves the object in the title, which, we have concluded, it does not, it's helpful, of course, to look at the context within which this bill is introduced, to determine what is necessary within that context to provide more opportunities for planning as well as more opportunities for transparency and, dare I say it, accountability. It's really important to understand the context, so let me begin by talking a

little bit about that context and the history that informs the context into which this bill is being introduced.

Chapter 1, let's just call it, of the context: 2019. In 2019 the UCP implemented the sole element of their economic plan, which was to slash corporate taxes from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. That was their economic plan. We were told in the budget materials, that we were provided when the budget was introduced, that that would ultimately cost Albertans about \$4.7 billion. Now, honestly, Mr. Speaker, I actually think that it's going to cost Albertans considerably more than that, and I say that on the basis of some of the limited information we've received from corporations that have reported to their shareholders the amount of money that they have gained as a result of that action taken by the UCP. In any event, we know it's at the very least a \$4.7 billion loss to the treasury. In return for that, the UCP hoped that it would stimulate the economy, to get some of the money back. The problem is that it didn't work.

What they ultimately did do, however, was that they raised income taxes on Albertans by \$600 million, something that they railed against before the election, and they raised fees by another \$900 million, for a total of \$1.5 billion. They then slashed spending on key public drivers of economic growth: tax credits for tech, our postsecondary system overall, that kind of thing.

Then we had their budget in 2019, where they projected that the budget would grow in 2019 by about .6 per cent. And just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, that was down from 2.2 per cent growth in 2018 and 4.4 per cent growth in 2017. So with this grand plan to create jobs and stimulate the economy, they themselves suggested that it would generate .6 per cent GDP growth in their fall budget. They also said in their fall budget of 2019 that this grand plan would contribute 21,000 jobs to the world here in Alberta.

Let's look at what happened in the latter part of chapter 1; i.e., what happened in 2019. Well, since the corporate tax cut was introduced and before the pandemic hit, which, of course, happened in 2020, Alberta lost 50,000 jobs. That's actually, therefore, 70,000 fewer jobs than were promised under the brilliant \$4.7 billion corporate handout. And I have to say that it doesn't really compare well with previous performances. In 2018, for instance, we see that the government of Alberta had created 44,000 jobs. So 2018, 44,000 jobs; 2019, corporate tax giveaway, 50,000 jobs lost.

4:40

Now, according to Statistics Canada what actually happened as well: the GDP didn't grow by .6 per cent in 2019. No. It actually shrunk by .6 per cent in 2019. So, you know, they got the .6 per cent right; it was just that it was in the wrong direction. That's a 1.2 per cent lower growth rate in 2019 than the UCP projected when they introduced their budget. But here's the thing. We all know things sometimes change between budget time and when the budget is over, but they introduced their budget in November 2019. There were only two months left. Why did we have a budget that included projections for 21,000 jobs? Why did we have a budget that included projections for a .6 per cent GDP increase? Why did we have that when there were only two months or very few months left in the fiscal year? That makes no sense. This goes to this issue of transparency and the ability to plan.

What we ultimately saw happen as a result of the corporate tax cut was that we saw billions of dollars in increased dividends and share buybacks, the vast majority of which went to foreign shareholders. Then we also saw corporate head offices decamp from Calgary altogether, like, for instance, EnCana, because it turned out that the corporate tax cut was not the magic wand that the Premier promised.

Now, when it comes to the fiscal clarity and projections and the merits of that in the 2019-2020 budget, it also appears that they

didn't get it right. The deficit, it turns out, is about \$850 million bigger than projected year over year. Also, this budget creates an additional \$9 billion in taxpayer-supported debt. To be clear, that is a significantly higher deficit than the deficit that ultimately was proven to be real in the budget last introduced by our government. So, in fact, 2019-20 was the first budget where this government actually introduced a deficit that was bigger than the deficit we delivered, and ultimately what they introduced to Albertans was a deficit that was almost a billion dollars bigger than what they put in their own budget a mere three months before the end of the fiscal year. It allows one to ask the question: how transparent, how accountable, how good was the planning with respect to that budget? I would say: not very good. They were out by 70,000 jobs. They were out by 1.2 per cent GDP growth. They were out by almost a billion dollars in their fiscal responsibility. Yeah, it just wasn't helpful.

The summary, then, for the 2019 track record was, as I said: deficit up by nearly a billion; debt up by over \$9 billion; 50,000 jobs lost; and they took a growing economy, implemented their plan, and delivered Albertans a recession. It's just important to go over that because, of course, again, we have narratives that develop. I think, you know, narratives are a political tool – we all use them – but I like my narratives to be able to connect to proof points and to facts. We've seen the evolution of the narrative from the folks over there wherein the Finance minister is now trying to suggest that before the COVID-19 pandemic we were cooking with gas and everything was on the way up and things were getting so, so, so much better. In fact, the fact is that that wasn't true, and their economic stimulation plan was not working.

Albertans need to know that so that they can hold their government accountable with respect to the plans and decisions they make around our budget for the remaining three years of their term. That's why transparency and accountability and planning, as identified in this bill, are so fundamentally important. Again, as I said, context is also important, and the context for 2019 was not stellar when it comes to those issues.

Let's go to chapter 2: 2020. In February Budget 2020 was introduced, and it doubled down on this failed economic strategy. Even with wildly optimistic assumptions, Budget 2020 still showed that Alberta was headed in the wrong direction. They revised down in Budget 2020, in February, their projected job numbers by 15,000, they revised down their projected GDP growth by .2 per cent for 2020, and they still clung to the belief that Alberta grew in 2019 even though we knew that it was shrinking, and it shrunk. That was all that was in the budget that was first introduced in February 2020. The projected deficit for '20-21 that was introduced just last February also assumed a higher deficit than the one our government last delivered in 2018-19, and of course another \$9 billion was going to be added in taxpayer-supported debt. So that's what was in the budget that was introduced in February 2020.

Now, we need to identify there for a moment, on the issues of transparency and accountability and timing and all those things, that that budget itself, pre-pandemic, pre oil price collapse, pre any of those things, was a fairy tale. It projected economic growth at 2.5 per cent, nowhere near the private-sector estimates. It was completely off, and it really was ridiculous. Also, the oil price projections that it included were completely off what we saw. Today we see the Finance minister get up in the House and try to claim that things were turning around in February 2020 if only it hadn't been for the pandemic, but you may recall that he said himself in a speech soon after that time, you know, as he introduced that budget, quote, it felt like Rome was burning.

The reality is that he knew in February 2020 that he was introducing a budget that was filled with projections and assumptions

that could not be supported by any version of an independent economic analysis, yet he introduced it. Now, three months later, he's trying to rewrite the history about the circumstances around which he introduced it. Let us be clear. In February 2020, before COVID, that budget was based on out-of-date numbers that nobody believed. It also continued to do three important things: it did not grow the economy, it grew the deficit, and it did not create jobs, by its own admission.

Then, of course, by mid-March 2020, in the context of the pandemic, we then had the spectre of the Premier marching in here, ripping up the rules of this House, the standing orders, jamming through a budget in a way that was unprecedented in parliamentary history. At that point, when that budget was passed, Alberta was on its way or was about halfway through losing more than 300,000 jobs. The Royal Bank now suggests that our economy will contract by 11.2 per cent, yet we passed a budget that projected 2 and a half per cent growth. I mean, come on, people. The Premier has since acknowledged that the deficit may rise by another \$14 billion on top of the \$6.9 billion or whatever it was that they put in that. Over \$20 billion, yet we passed a budget that suggested the deficit would be less than \$7 billion. In the midst of all that, though, they still carried forward with all their personal income tax increases, their increases on user fees and then ensured that those corporations that continue to be profitable got to continue to pocket money from Albertans.

Now, like most other governments, what the Premier could have done was waited to present Albertans with a real economic and fiscal plan that reflected reality, that reflected the numbers. We just saw Saskatchewan release its Budget 2020 on June 15, and we see the impact of COVID-19: nonrenewable resource revenue down 43 per cent, real GDP down 6.3 per cent, WTI at \$30 a barrel, oil production to decline by 13, 14 per cent. How does that compare to the budget we passed in February? Well, we're still planning this year that oil is going to be at \$58 a barrel – yup – and we're planning a 4.5 per cent growth in oil production in 2020. You know, it really was just an unprecedented demonstration of a complete disregard for the facts and a disregard of the duty that this government has to place before this House documents that include numbers that they know to be true.

4:50

Instead, they put forward numbers that they absolutely – the evidence was everywhere – knew were complete fairy tales that simply were not correct. They forced this House to vote on it, and they doubled down on an economic strategy which had failed before the pandemic and is destined to fail through it. Personal income taxes going up. Fees going up. Deficit going up. Debt going up. Jobs going down. That's what we passed.

Now, following the pandemic, we continue to implement a stale and faltering economic plan with no appreciation of what the future might look like in the view of the government. You know, we're looking at projections that global oil demand will go down about almost 10 per cent from prepandemic levels, no recovery until November 2021, well outside the term of the budget that we passed in February '20. We've seen significant reductions in long-term expected prices over the next 30 years in the price of oil.

Where does that leave us with all of this? Well, we have, you know, the much-vaunted Janice MacKinnon report, which is full of multiple errors and mistakes and problems and failed assumptions and bad ideas, but these folks over there seem to like it. One of the things that she recommended to them, one of the few things that had some value was a hard budget date, but this legislation doesn't do that. It creates a budget window. It does absolutely nothing to stop us from ever being subjected to the outrage and the injury of

having to sit in this House and pass a budget after the standing orders have been ripped up and to vote on a budget that every single independent, objective economic analysis showed us was wrong. It was really, probably, one of the most shameful things that this House has ever been forced to do and that, you know, members of the government were forced to do, that they had to vote on something that was so clearly wrong and inaccurate.

One wouldn't have thought, therefore, that we needed a budget transparency and planning act to protect Albertans from members of the House passing a budget that they knew to be inaccurate at the time of passing. You wouldn't have thought that you needed to do that. Then again, you would never have thought you would have seen this spectre of disrespect for the traditions of parliament that we saw in March 2020, when the standing orders were ripped up and the fake budget was passed by members of the government caucus.

But given that that is what we saw and given that it is paired with the repeated inaccuracies and failures that preceded it, the inaccuracies and failures that we saw in a budget that was introduced in November 2019, when the projections and the estimates were already clearly demonstrating that they were not going to be able to meet the targets that they had in that budget, the budget that we saw then introduced in February 2020, which was way off of what most people would suggest was reasonable, and then that very budget being jammed through undemocratically a month later in this House, when at that point it was utterly clear that it was a storytime kind of document, given that we've seen that, we desperately do need a bill that ensures transparency, ensures accountability, ensures the ability for people who rely on the government of Alberta to be able to plan, but this bill doesn't do it.

You know, speaking of planning, I think just sort of off the top of my head of school boards, who desperately need to know how much money they will get from this government, and within a two-week period the Minister of Education changes her mind and yanks \$120 million away from them. I mean, people in this province desperately need clarity from this government. They desperately need them to keep their word. They desperately need them to put actual factual numbers on paper and then feel some semblance of an ethical responsibility to be held accountable by those factual pieces of information. But that's not what we've got.

Every time these folks have gotten anywhere near the issue of planning and money and giving advice to stakeholders and other Albertans who need to be able to count on things, it's just gone up in thin air, so we do need a bill that meets the objects of the title to this bill, Bill 4. The problem is that this bill – I can't count the numbers of ways it's short. I could probably sit here for days and days and talk about the kinds of things we could put in it to stop that kind of thing from ever happening again, but obviously the folks here are not interested in any of those things.

You know, it really is truly important. Just today we saw again the Premier start to capitulate on something that he committed to Albertans in black and white repeatedly, over and over again. He committed it to them because, in his own words: he would lose the election if he didn't commit it to them; that he had no intention of going after the minimum wage of a quarter of a million Albertans. What we heard today is that that's clearly not true and that he was not clear with Albertans prior to the election. It appears the reason for that was because he thought it would jeopardize his ability to win the election.

Again, if that is the standard by which this government operates, we absolutely need a bill that would provide for fiscal planning and transparency, but I have to say that suggesting that the answer to the multiple infractions around stability, accountability, holding to the plan, and providing transparency can be fixed by simply

providing a month's window within which the budget will be introduced: well, that, again, is about as speculative and ineffective as everything else that we've seen introduced by this government when it comes to providing fiscal stability to the people of Alberta.

The last thing that I will say on this is that going forward, we do need a plan. We need a plan that is based in reality. We need a plan that is based in evidence-based research and opinion and the best information that we can possibly gather. We need that information to be shared widely so that it can be tested and retested so that we know that it's actually good information. We need Albertans to be engaged in the path forward, and we need a government that can be trusted to be honest and accountable about the information that they're placing before Albertans. We need that now more than ever, Mr. Speaker, because our province is heading into some very, very difficult times with respect to our economic security and our fiscal capacity.

Albertans need to know that they can trust what they hear from their government, and unfortunately that's not a position that most governments believe that they are in right now. I would urge members opposite to find some way – which is certainly not going to be reflected in this bill – to restore some element of trust amongst Albertans and faith that the things that they say actually will be the things that they do or the things that are correct, because in failing to do that, as we move forward, there will be great challenges for people of this province trying to do everything we can to pull together to support economic growth, to support diversification, to support resilience, to support recovery. You can't have those things if it is founded on a fundamental distrust that arises from fundamental breaches of the trust.

5:00

You know, I mean, the other thing that I find ironic about this bill is that we've seen this government use a combination of motions, rewritten standing orders, and closure to actually change the rules of the game in something like 24 hours. Of course, even if this bill did something, I could certainly see them choosing to change it in an omnibus with no kind of notice.

Given that the actual rules that do provide Albertans with not tremendous but some rights of accountability, transparency, democracy – those rules were embedded in the standing orders of this House. Those were the rules that allowed Albertans to engage with their MLAs and to then engage in a proper budget estimate process, where each ministry was considered for a requisite amount of time and enough consideration could be had to ensure that the wishes of Albertans could be reflected in the budget debate. Of course, when this government chose to rip those up unceremoniously, they actually there fundamentally assaulted the notions of transparency and, through that, accountability.

So I do find it incredibly ironic that we are now debating a bill that is talking about planning and transparency after the spectre of the profound attack on transparency and accountability and democracy that we saw with the dissolution of the standing orders that have been in place for as long as I've been a member of this House to ensure a robust and open and transparent debate between the Executive Council and, through the remaining members of this House, the people of Alberta. You know, again, the irony is – well, it's not sweet; it's deep. Every day is a new day where we see that kind of thing with these folks.

Nonetheless, all that being said, I would urge the members opposite to vote against this. I would urge government members opposite to vote against this. I would urge them to suggest to their Executive Council that they consider bringing in a meaningful bill to provide transparency and accountability and to restore trust with

the many Albertans with whom they no longer have that trust, because, again, as I say, we're going to have to come together as a province to talk about the path forward, and we cannot do that in the face of the many breaches of trust that we have seen from this government over the last, whatever it is, 13, 14 months.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and summarize again or at least summarize why it is we will be voting against this bill.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Oh. Correction: it's not available.

Is there anyone else that wishes to join in the debate this evening?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on third reading. I will allow the hon. member . . .

Mrs. Savage: I would just move that we call the vote on third reading.

The Speaker: It's not possible for you to do that, but I'll be happy to do that on your behalf.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:04 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Jones	Rutherford
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Savage
Copping	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Lovely	Smith
Getson	Madu	Toor
Glasgo	McIver	Turton
Gotfried	Nicolaides	van Dijken
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Hanson	Rowswell	Yaseen
Issik		

5:20

Against the motion:

Ceci	Renaud	Schmidt
Dach	Sabir	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 7
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[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

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

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments or questions to be offered with regard to amendment A1? If you do not have amendment A1, we can make sure that we get copies to you. I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen to comment on A1.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to rise and speak to amendment A1, put forward by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The amendment, I think, does something that's extremely important for this legislation, and I appreciate it and encourage all members of the House to read it and understand what it's saying.

It's really ensuring sort of the spirit of the original purpose of this legislation, that victims of crime receive support from this fund that this legislation sort of controls. That is in question now by this new legislation, Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020, Bill 16. The amendment asks that 75 per cent of the allocations continue to be made to victims of crime, which is the, you know, original purpose of this legislation. Of course, the bill itself is stating that they want to divert some of those funds to public safety, so we're saying or, rather, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has proposed through this amendment only 25 per cent of the fund, so still the vast majority would go to victims of crime. I think that this is a very reasonable amendment, and I encourage all my colleagues to support this.

Certainly, we know that the victims of crime fund has been supporting community organizations, indigenous communities, and victims' services programming for over two decades, so this is a long-established fund that is very important in very difficult times when people are victims of crime. Of course, the fundamental principle of the fund has been to help subsidize programming, training, and services for victims of serious crime. It is specifically for victims who have experienced violent crimes that access this fund, and the intention of these funds is to help deal with physical and psychological injuries as well as reimbursements for funerals and supplemental benefits for those who've suffered brain injuries.

We know that some stats recently – according to Alberta Justice the budget amounted to about \$16 million in 2015. This has been, as I just said, a long-established fund. We want to make sure that victims of crime in Alberta who have experienced sort of a horrific life event get the support they need. Of course, this legislation is shifting the focus pretty significantly from that focus of supporting victims of crime and moving it more into a public safety focus. It's putting those two together, but they're really very distinct things that should really be dealt with separately. I think that this amendment goes some way into making the victims of crime the priority for this legislation, as it has been all along. Therefore, the lion's share, the 75 per cent of the funding that's allocated, should be going to victims of crime who have, you know, experienced a horrific life event. We want to make sure that in a very difficult situation, these victims are supported and these funds are not put in public safety.

You know, there is so much money that could be put into public safety – I mean, that is valid in its own right – but that could take that whole budget. Certainly, we don't want individuals who have experienced crime to not receive these funds and not be supported. I just really think this amendment from my hon. colleague for Calgary-Mountain View is really important for us to consider.

Certainly, we know that the legislation has expanded to include public safety initiatives to help reduce victimization by deteriorating crime through ALERT, RAPID force, drug treatment courts, and hiring more Crown prosecutors. That public safety aspect, as you can imagine, could take, you know, millions and millions of dollars, and that is a concern for us, certainly on this side of the House, that victims would all of a sudden not be able to access those funds, not only the victims but also the nonprofit organizations that support the victims.

Certainly, in the Edmonton area – I just did a quick search – there are several agencies that do serve victims of crime. They include the Alberta coalition on human trafficking, Assist Community

Services, the Bissel Centre, Catholic Social Services, the Edmonton John Howard Society, of course, Edmonton Police Service. These are just some of the agencies that do help people through these very challenging times. But what we have heard from the community, certainly regarding the 2019 funding, there have been reports that no new support dollars were being provided to these agencies so that indeed they could support, you know, victims of crime, saying that there is a moratorium on those applications.

I guess I'm raising a red flag with the government. Are these agencies to be defunded and then the allocations going exclusively to these more public safety-focused initiatives? If that is true – and these agencies seem to be, you know, sounding the alarm on that – then that is a deep concern. That's why this amendment is so significant. We must not forget the focus of what this legislation should be about, and that is to really help victims of crime in an extremely vulnerable time in their lives. We mustn't lose sight of how important that is.

5:30

Again, the allocation of funds: 75 per cent of those funds needs to go directly to the supporting of victims. Of course, we know that individuals in violent crimes may have experienced physical damage, emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss as a result of the crime, so it's important that they be compensated for that. We want to make sure that they're supported to be able to overcome this. You know, it could be very much a trauma event, that without that support they may not be able to move on in their lives, be able to have healthy work situations, healthy relationship situations. Those supports must be available for them, and these agencies, some of which I just listed, more sort of in the metro Edmonton area, need the supports of this fund to make sure that they can support people who are experiencing, who have experienced and been a victim of some crime.

Certainly, the legislation that has been put forward: we're not clear now. If you're a witness to a homicide, there used to be a one-time benefit of \$5,000. Will that still go on? There's some question whether that has actually been taken away from this legislation. Certainly, there had been supplemental benefits, monthly payments for victims with severe injuries needing assistance for daily activities. Certainly, we know about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act, a legacy program that ceased taking new applications back in 1996, that helped applicants to receive lifetime benefits.

Now, the focus of this review board, who looks at grants and what funding will go out to these agencies, not only has to look at that, but they have to look at all these public safety aspects, too, as I said: hiring more police officers, hiring more Crown prosecutors. Very quickly the money in that fund can be allocated to something that could be, like, as I said, millions of dollars. So we must not forget the primary purpose of this fund. Of course, I think this legislation is wanting to change that, but this amendment does put the focus back on victims of crime, who have experienced a very traumatic life event and need to be absolutely supported by, you know, the province making sure that they can go on with their lives after a very horrific event. I encourage all members to be sure to support this amendment so that those folks can be supported.

I mean, we always – I know the members opposite believe, because they've certainly said it to us while we were in government and even now when we're not, just how important consultation is. I'm wondering if the government – these are just a few questions for the government. How much have they consulted on this matter? Have they met with these agencies that now have, you know, not received funding and have this moratorium? Do they understand what that impact will be? Certainly, they have first-hand experience working with the victims, so they would have some pretty good

understanding of how this will impact that community, that population that they serve. Have they had consultations with those people and those agencies?

Have they spoken with sexual assault associations, for example? Sadly, Alberta has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the country, and certainly there are organizations with important expertise to know how to support people through a horrific, traumatic event like that. Have those kinds of consultations gone on?

Of course, indigenous groups: their voices need to be heard from sort of a nation-to-nation perspective, honouring, you know, their wisdom and knowledge of their elders in how folks can be supported. We know that because of colonization many of our indigenous communities have a lot of challenges in them, so we need to make sure that we're understanding it from their perspective and not, as members of the dominant culture, enforcing that on a group. We need to be respectful of what their view is. Again I ask: what kind of conversations, what kind of reaching out to the indigenous communities across this province have been done to support these vulnerable groups and, certainly, these groups who have been through a very traumatic event when they become victims of a horrific crime?

You know, of course, just fundamental to any good legislation is making sure that you have spoken with all of the stakeholders and that you understand what works and what doesn't. I just would like to hear from the minister, when he has an opportunity to speak, about what actually they have done to develop this legislation and who they talked to about it. We do need to know: like, will this grant funding continue for these agencies that do that front-line work that is so vital to the well-being of victims of crime so that they can overcome those traumas and, hopefully, reintegrate into their jobs, into their relationships in our communities, with their family systems, making sure that that is all done?

This is such a, I suppose, heavy issue because – you know, I'm very grateful. I haven't really experienced sort of a violent crime, certainly haven't witnessed a homicide or anything like that, but I can only imagine, if you had experienced that, how much that would shape your life. Without the proper treatment, both your medical health and also your psychological, mental health, therapeutically how you're supported through this: I mean, if that isn't done, then that can really be very difficult for the rest of your life and impact those around you. Certainly, we're not islands as humans; we're connected to our family systems, our communities, our societies. That can ripple out and affect others in negative ways if it's not supported and dealt with, addressed.

Funding for these agencies that I've spoken about, like the Sexual Assault Centre, is very important. We can't be forgetting that when we're diverting too many funds to the public safety aspect of it. That certainly is something that we're concerned about here on this side of the Assembly.

Having spoken about the amendment that has been put forward by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, I certainly do, as I said, encourage all members to see the importance of keeping the essence of this legislation, the priority being that 75 per cent goes to victims of crime and 25 per cent for public safety. We just want to have that clarification so that we make sure that victims of crime are supported through this legislation and not forgotten, because the public safety aspect certainly is important, but perhaps it shouldn't be an either/or in this case. It actually perhaps would have been better if it was kept in a separate fund, a separate system to support that instead of amalgamating these two because we don't want to lose sight of how important it is to help people who've been through some tragic and traumatic event. Already it seems the government

had made some decisions about moving away, perhaps, from supporting victims.

5:40

I think that that's – you know, certainly, there is research done on not investing up front and sort of the costs later. Oftentimes it's to do with poverty, but I think it fits in this situation, too. Certainly, Vibrant Communities Calgary has done reports about the costs of poverty in our province. If people aren't supported at the front end when they first experience some challenge, some trauma, then it actually, long term, can cost us much more. It also gives people dignity. It is respectful that people be given the supports, especially when, by no fault of their own, a traumatic, violent crime is committed. I think a just society absolutely supports those folks. I mean, these reports of Vibrant Communities Calgary: they've done it for the province, and they say that the costs of poverty are \$7 billion to \$9 billion. They're a few years old, so that number is probably much higher now.

I think that we're making a mistake if we take funding away from victims of crime, take funding away from these agencies because their work is valuable, and I think it can mitigate, you know, a lot of challenges further down the road and certainly support people to live with dignity and sort of reintegrate after this very traumatic event.

With that, Mr. Chair, I just again encourage my colleagues to support this very, I think, important amendment, and I'll end my debate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen to debate on amendment A1.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise again today in the House to offer my comments, this time on the amendment for Bill 16. What this piece of legislation is to me is just another reason for me to blame the current UCP government for my slowly balding head, because I call this piece of legislation, that we're now trying to amend, one of their head-scratchers. They come up with them regularly, and it leaves me scratching my head, wondering what in the world they're actually trying to do.

I don't say this just for myself; I call them head-scratchers, Mr. Chair, because I can picture mister or missus or miss or Albertans sitting in their chairs at home or reading their newspapers or watching social media, looking at pieces of legislation that are brought by this government, and the immediate reaction is: what in the world are they doing? They scratch their head and can't figure this out. Some of the things that they're doing: it just begs the question as to who dreamt this up.

The amendment we're bringing forward, Mr. Chair, attempts to correct one of these, I think, ill-conceived plans to basically raid a cookie jar. I'm not sure if there was an active search that went on by the government members or their researchers or political apparatchiks to find sources of money that they could dip into to accomplish certain of their political agendas and their legislative agendas without increasing their deficit, but it seems as though that's what's been going on. In this particular case, those that are at home scratching their heads will just simply look towards – I would call it a Pot of Gold, as you may have heard about the Moirs box of chocolates, or the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Somebody stumbled onto what they might have called a pot of gold and said: hey, we can use this money for other purposes that it wasn't intended for rather than actually making sure that it gets used to benefit people who it should be used for.

In this case, I'm talking about the victims of crime fund, of course, Mr. Chair. It's noted that in 2016 the Auditor General reported, "The fund is growing at a rate faster than payments to victims are being made." Of course, they went on to recommend better management of the fund. Well, that begs the question, Mr. Chair: indeed, if the fund is growing at a rate faster than payments to the victims are being made, why are victims not being fully compensated?

I haven't heard a huge hue and cry or seen newspaper articles from victims of crime saying: "Well, you know, the crime fund has been overly generous to me. My family doesn't need any more benefits, so we're going to return this money to the victims of crime fund to somebody else." That's not been the case, Mr. Chair. The victims of crime fund was growing because victims of crime weren't being fully compensated for the criminal activity that was perpetrated against them and the harm that was done to them.

The government, rather than going ahead and finding out how they could better apply these monies that were being collected on behalf of victims of crime to ensure that they were fully compensated, to ensure that service agencies that reached out to serve victims of crime were fully funded, Mr. Chair, what they've chosen to do is say: "Hey, let's dip into this for something else. We want to do some things with the system of justice and prosecution, and we're going to use this money to do it."

We're making a political judgment, Mr. Chair, as I'm alleging that the government may have done. It sure seems that way. We're making a political judgment that these individual agencies and people involved as victims of crime were very unlikely to really raise a scolding voice against it, looking at individuals who are least able or likely to create a fuss about losing funding. They're trying to sell the public on the idea that they're going to be improving, in their view, the system of justice by investing more in enforcement and prosecution but using funds intended for victims of crime.

This amendment, Mr. Chair, I believe is a reasonable compromise to really make that statement clear, that we believe this fund should be used to compensate victims of crime and that 75 per cent of the total amount paid for the fund from that fiscal year must go to that end. Even though I wonder whether that number shouldn't be higher, let's say that we'll meet the government partway down their road and ask them to support this amendment that 75 per cent of the total amount paid for the fund for that fiscal year at the very least is going towards the victims of crime fund and won't be leaving, perhaps, Albertans scratching their heads as to why the government has decided to raid the fund to pay for other legislative goals that they might have.

As I said, the head-scratcher that is here that people are going to be wondering about is simply: why are they not using the fund fully to compensate victims of crime? The area that they're using the money in is related, but it's certainly not the same purpose. If indeed they need more dollars, they should be budgeting for more dollars and a line item dedicated to that in their budget rather than raiding the victims of crime fund to pay for a line item in a budget that should be clearly denoted in their budget and paid for directly by that. I continue to scratch my head. I'm wondering how many other potential pots of gold we're going to see raided by this government to pay for some of their other legislative ventures that they think they can get away with.

5:50

As it's mentioned, the purpose of this victims of crime fund is to serve the victims of crime. From my understanding of some of the payments that are being made to people, it certainly doesn't fully compensate them for the damages that they've incurred as a result of being a victim of crime. Like, how do you pay for somebody's

loss of a loved one or horrific injuries that they may have suffered themselves as a result of being a victim of crime? The purpose of this fund was certainly not to replace the giant hole that the UCP blew in their budget before we were hit with the double economic hardship of the pandemic and the crash in the price of oil.

Now, many umbrella organizations have been defunded, and those, of course, stood with the victims of crime, victims of sexual assault. Experts are telling us that as a result of the pandemic we may be seeing more instances of domestic violence occurring, and I think, of course, they occur particularly against women. We've seen reports of this during the pandemic, that with the orders to stay home and no options to leave, the victims of domestic violence levels increased. This is not the time to be skimming from programs like the victims of crime fund, when indeed there is a demand for compensation rising.

I know, Mr. Chair, that the agencies that have served the victims of crime are deeply concerned, and they've not heard anything in response from the Minister of Justice about why indeed he sees fit to dip into funds that are supposedly going to help those agencies minister to the needs of victims of crime. What we are trying to do with our amendment is to rectify a large portion of that shortfall.

It seems to be a pattern, though, as I've said before, that this government looks for pots of gold, cookie jars that they can raid. They've done a similar type of thing with respect to rural municipalities, where they were paying for policing, and now they're forcing victims of crime to pay for it. It takes funds from the victims of crime fund to pay for the UCP's police force promises. I think it's pretty shameful. I really don't understand. I'm left scratching my head as to why the government would see this as a justifiable way of paying for budget line items that should actually be budgeted for. Perhaps they see that they might be able to show a slightly smaller deficit as a result of that. That may be one of their hopes.

For crying out loud, victims of crime are not the individuals you should be looking to to balance your budget on the backs of. You should be looking to make sure that fund is working properly in the first place, and if indeed the fund is growing faster than the payments are being made out, take a look at why, and look at the types of schedules for compensation that are in place right now, and find out if indeed individuals are fully being compensated for the hurt that has been caused by the crimes that have been perpetrated against them. That's the natural thing that one would expect any government would do rather than lick their chops and say: hey, there's a pot of gold here for us to skim off to use for some other purposes. I don't understand that necessity at all.

They've done it in other places, and it's something that I think will be replicated time and time again if indeed this government is allowed to get away with it, so we on this side of the House are raising the alarm bells and trying to make sure the citizens of this province are aware of exactly what's going on with this particular program and, of course, others that we'll bring to light.

Now, with the victims of crime fund the amendment that we're bringing forward does go partway to allowing the government to freelance a little bit with some of the money beyond what they were able to do previously. But we're hoping that we're raising alarm bells loud enough to say that if you want to use some of these funds for purposes other than what they have been used for over the long term – that is, to clearly and directly benefit the victims of crime – then you'd better be able to justify them, not as a line item in a budget to pay for something that you would expect would come out of general revenues and be budgeted for and be subject to the scrutiny of the process of budget debates and estimates but by actually going ahead and calculating what you're going to need to

pay for your desires to police and enforce your criminal justice system.

I hope that the remaining 25 per cent that this amendment will leave in the hands of discretion, let's say . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but under Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress on Bill 16, the Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports

progress on the following bill: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly adjourn until 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	1431
Members' Statements	
Men's Health Week	1431
High School Graduates 2020	1431
Commercial Tenancies Protection	1431
Campus Saint-Jean	1432
Rodeo	1432
Elder Abuse Awareness and Care Facilities	1432
Provincial Fiscal Position	1432
Economic Relaunch and Personal Safety	1433
COVID-19 and Religious Observances	1433
Notices of Motions	1433
Oral Question Period	
Fair Deal Panel Report	1434, 1436
Minimum Wage	1434
Calgary Storm	1435
Commercial Tenancies Protection	1435
Rent Freeze and Eviction Ban End Date	1437
Environmental Monitoring	1437
Provincial COVID-19 Related Assistance to Quebec	1438
Government Appointments	1438
Policing and Racism Prevention	1439
Brain Injury	1439
Systemic Racism Prevention	1440
Bill 22 Companies Act Amendments	1440
Postsecondary Education Review	1441
Tabling Returns and Reports	1441
Orders of the Day	1442
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 4 Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020	1442, 1452
Division	1455
Second Reading	
Bill 21 Provincial Administrative Penalties Act	1442
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 16 Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020	1455

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For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca