



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 22, 2020

Day 35

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 22, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, would you please remain standing.

Dr. Winston Osler Backus October 12, 1920, to June 15, 2020

The Speaker: Let us pay tribute to a member who recently passed away. Winston O. Backus served two terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Grande Prairie, from 1971 to 1979. Following his first election, he was named to cabinet as minister of public works, a position he held until 1975. Born in Alberta, Dr. Backus obtained his medical degree from the University of London. After serving as a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1948 to 1953, he returned to Alberta to work as one of the first doctors at Ponoka municipal hospital. Dr. Backus's contributions over the years were varied and included time as the chair of the Grande Prairie school board, member and chair of the Grande Prairie Regional College board, and program co-ordinator for Eye Care, a support group for individuals with vision loss. He was dedicated to community public service and his family throughout his life. Dr. Backus passed away on June 15, 2020, at the age of 99.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Dr. Backus as each of you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let Your light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Brooklyn Elhard. In observation of the COVID-19 public health guidelines outlined by Dr. Deena Hinshaw, please refrain from singing in the language of your choice.

Ms Elhard:

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Brooklyn. Amazing. I particularly enjoyed the tempo this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Hon. members, please be seated.

Members' Statements

Biprovincial Jurisdictional Overlap in Lloydminster

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, many know Lloydminster as a pleasant place to live, raise a family, and retire. Many also know that Lloydminster is located directly on the border with our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan, with the provincial

boundary splitting the community in two. The unique nature of this border town has led to many structural and administrative conventions, which can from time to time cause confusion for the residents and the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Administration for some of the health and all of the education on both sides of the border falls under Saskatchewan's control and is subject to the government of Saskatchewan's regulations, not Alberta's. Effectively, Saskatchewan is governing part of Alberta. Although for many years this system of co-operation has not caused significant consternation, there is a general sense that the long-standing arrangement is overdue for evaluation. This has been particularly highlighted during the current pandemic.

The Alberta and Saskatchewan governments have pursued different courses of action, leaving many residents feeling bewildered and law-abiding residents not knowing which specific health orders to follow. Lloydminster's city council declared a state of emergency on March 19 and chose to follow Saskatchewan's guidelines. Effectively, this once again meant that Albertans were subject to Saskatchewan legislation and emergency procedures. Although the quarantine and sanitation procedures were handled with consummate professionalism, the COVID-19 incident at the Lloydminster hospital further emphasizes the point that a review of shared responsibilities should be conducted. The duplication of tasks for the government and residents costs too much time and too much money when such unnecessary inefficiencies can least be afforded. I'm looking forward to continue working with our Saskatchewan partners to resolve this jurisdictional overlap.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Alberta's Black History

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we had our first debate on an issue weighing heavily on the minds of black, brown, and indigenous Albertans, systemic racism, where the Premier suggested the most powerful tool we have to combat it is relationships, letting those who harbour hatred get to know those they hate. He told the story of a single black Albertan, John Ware. Now, John was a great man, worthy of remembrance, and, yes, he was respected across racial lines, but as late as 1970 even this extraordinary man was still commemorated as Nigger John.

Let me be clear. Black history in Alberta did not begin or end with John Ware, and neither did antiblack racism. John died in 1905. In 1911 Edmonton MP Frank Oliver drafted an order in council to block black immigration. In 1914 Charles Daniels sued Calgary's Sherman Grand Theatre for denying him a seat he bought outside their coloured section. In 1922 Lulu Anderson sued the Metropolitan on Jasper Avenue for the same. In 1924 Mrs. Poston led a coalition of black Edmontonians to petition the city of Edmonton to end segregation at their pools. In 1959 Ted King sued a Calgary motel that refused to rent him a room. All those petitions failed.

For decades the best work most black Albertans could expect to find was in labour as railway porters or as domestic help, and even as of 2016 black Albertans in our largest cities made 70 per cent as much as their nonblack counterparts and were one and a half to two times more likely to be unemployed. They continue to be disproportionately targeted and impacted by police and the criminal justice system. It took nine months for Una and Emmell Momolu to receive an apology after he was racially profiled by an officer at his Edmonton Catholic school.

Relationships haven't fixed these systemic problems, and it's not up to black Albertans to earn that fix. They should not have to be

John Ware to be given the dignity, respect, and opportunity that each of us is entitled to as Albertans, Canadians, and human beings.

High School Graduation 2020

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, we are facing difficult times as a country and as a province. With a global health pandemic and a global recession, we are all navigating through uncharted waters, and this holds true for the graduates of the class of 2020. At this point in the year many schools are usually preparing for a huge celebration for their senior class. This year many schools are having to find other creative ways to celebrate. The reality is that many of the students will not have the opportunity to celebrate in person with each other, their friends, and their families, so more than ever it's important that their hard work still receives the proper recognition and acknowledgement.

I want to rise here today and congratulate and recognize the extraordinary class of 2020. As the MLA for Highwood it's a huge honour and a privilege to speak at grad ceremonies across the constituency. I would have preferred to celebrate with each grad class in person. I would have loved to witness all the amazing graduates walk across the stage and see their years of hard work come to reality. While I'll not be able to do that, I still wanted to speak to all of them.

1:40

Every student in the class of 2020 has earned their cap and gown, and COVID-19 should not take away from their incredible accomplishments as graduates. Remember that your hard work and determination have not been ignored or forgotten. You all should be immensely proud of how far you have already come. I'm sure there were times when it was hard, even seemed impossible, but you still did it.

As you move forward, many of you already have a destination in mind, or you may not. All I ask is that you keep your hearts and minds open, that you continue to work hard and pursue your passions. Your future is truly limitless. Whatever path the graduates of 2020 choose, I'm confident that the class of 2020 will put their knowledge and that passion to good work.

Congratulations to all the graduating Christ the Redeemer Foothills school division and Centre for Learning@HOME students of 2020.

Fort McMurray Flooding and Calgary Storm

Member Ceci: In late April a devastating flood hit Fort McMurray; 13,000 people had to leave their homes. Thousands of evacuees had to stay in temporary housing. Homes were flooded. Vehicles were destroyed. The hearts of all Albertans went out to the residents of Fort McMurray, an iconic city in our province, who have been through so much these past years. To his credit, even the Premier realized that the people of this province, through their government, needed to take action. He declared the obvious: the situation was a disaster. The government of Alberta stepped up and approved nearly \$150 million in disaster relief funding.

Fast-forward a month, and the Premier is missing in action. Another natural disaster has hit an iconic city, and this time it's Calgary. Hail the size of softballs, the likes of which we've rarely seen, if ever seen, tore through glass and metal. Vehicles were destroyed, homes were scarred, and much of northeast Calgary looks like a war zone. It's like a Gatling gun was brought in and tore up neighbourhood after neighbourhood after neighbourhood. The early estimates of the damages are in the range of a billion dollars.

In the midst of a pandemic, with much of the economy closed down, Calgarians took steps to save every penny. Many removed insurance on their vehicles because they were 5,000-pound paperweights stuck in their driveways. Then the storms came and wreaked their devastation, and now thousands of families are facing financial ruin.

Despite it being unquestionably the worst disaster since the 2013 floods in that city, this Premier won't even formally declare the hailstorm what it is, a disaster. Instead, he is demanding studies. He's missing what everyone with eyes can see, but what all Calgarians know and what all Albertans know is that this government needs to step up, just like they did for Fort McMurray. Premier, stop fiddling. Please help the people of northeast Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Canadian Tractor Museum in Westlock

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start my statement off today with a question. What is one of the most iconic pieces of agricultural equipment? What is one of the first things that comes to mind when you think about farming? Of course, I am talking about the tractor. They come in many different brands such as John Deere, Case, New Holland, Caterpillar, and many others. The tractor is an important piece of farming equipment that is used for a variety of tasks around the farm such as plowing, tilling, planting, feeding livestock, and the list goes on.

One of the best places to learn about tractors and their history is the Canadian Tractor Museum, located in Westlock, Alberta. The Canadian Tractor Museum is a large facility that showcases a wide range of over 200 different antique tractors from a variety of time periods. They have a 1919 International Harvester model 10-20 Titan, a 1937 Massey-Harris Pacemaker, and many more. All of these tractors represent snapshots in time of Canada's great agricultural heritage. The goal of the museum is to preserve, portray, and interpret from a Canadian point of view the history of the tractor and related equipment. The museum fosters appreciation and knowledge of our agricultural history with a well-laid-out display of tractors as well as other farm machinery. The many different exhibits are geared towards a wide range of audiences, from researchers to tourists. There's something there to see and appreciate for everyone.

The Canadian Tractor Museum is once again open following the COVID-19 shutdown. Their hours of operation are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. throughout the summer. This facility is an excellent opportunity to get more acquainted with our agricultural history and to develop an appreciation for all the hard work that goes into ensuring that Canadians have high-quality food to eat. I encourage everyone to come on down to Westlock and check it out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: At Pioneer Acres near Irricana this weekend I took a ride on an 1920 Rumely Oil Pull. Lots of excitement out there.

River Lot 56 Natural Area in St. Albert

Ms Renaud: River lot 56 is a pristine natural area treasured by residents of St. Albert and Sturgeon county. Thousands of my constituents flock to the river lot each year, every year to hike the trails in the summer, ski in the winter. This government loves to use jargon like "alternative management proposals" to obscure its plans to remove the river lot and 164 other parks from our publicly protected park system. The government claims it wants to find new partners to manage these parks; failing that, it will sell them off and turn a profit.

With River lot 56 the government clearly hasn't done its homework. It already has a community partner, who it continues to ignore. Since the '80s River lot 56 has been managed and maintained by the Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society, dedicated St. Albert and area volunteers who are the official stewards. According to the society the government has still not bothered to speak with them or consult with them about the future of the river lot even as recently as this past weekend. This is unbelievable.

River lot 56 is part of our past and present in St. Albert. It needs to be part of the future. This past has at times been dark. The river lot was originally preserved as part of St. Albert's traditional French-Canadian settlement system, and in the '20s a portion of the natural area became the site of the Edmonton Indian residential school. But the river lot has moved from a place of pain into one where our community comes together. Maintained by the community in partnership with the province, River lot 56 is a place where St. Albertans from all walks of life can experience the beauty of nature together.

The people of St. Albert and Sturgeon county have been clear: over 1,700 of them have signed a petition I will table to keep River lot 56 public. Premier, Minister, and Member for Morinville-St. Albert: you have a community partner who you continue to ignore. Do the right thing: talk to the natural area society; protect River lot 56.

Libraries

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, libraries are incredibly important community and learning hubs all over the province but especially in rural communities and even cities and towns like the two I represent. As a former trustee of the Spruce Grove library board I've seen first-hand all that libraries can do for a community. From delivering local programming to engaging children with their first books to providing a hub where those who need it can get computer and Internet access, libraries deliver essential services, often to those especially in need.

Alberta has a great legacy of supporting libraries. With well over a quarter of Albertans owning a library card and 322 libraries spread out across the province, Albertans have great access to these important institutions. Now, I believe that the government of Alberta has done a good job of supporting libraries as well. Over our time in office we have kept library funding stable, and my thanks go to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in that regard. We have also worked with libraries right across the province to build not just an extensive system of interlibrary loans but also allowing people who have library cards to access almost all libraries province-wide with it.

I was excited to see that libraries made stage 2 of Alberta's economic relaunch plan, a further sign that our government understands the important role libraries play in both our economy and our communities, and I look forward to continuing to support libraries and their important work over my tenure as an MLA, whether it be with the Spruce Grove or Stony Plain libraries or the Yellowhead regional library. Today my thanks go to the libraries, librarians, and the many other staff and volunteers who make all that libraries do possible.

Thank you.

School Class Closures and Education Funding

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, the changes brought on by the onset of this pandemic were stressful for all Albertans, but perhaps it was most stressful for the youngest of Albertans. With the emergency shift to remote delivery, all of a sudden they were disconnected

from their peers and in many instances from the learning supports that they needed to be successful. Indeed, for many students, their needs increased with challenges that came with distance learning. Then, when they were already struggling to keep up, this UCP government cut funding to educational assistants, when children and parents needed them most.

Around 20,000 EAs and other school staff had been providing and continue to provide continuity for students with learning disabilities, autism, and mental health issues while classes switched to online learning. While the Minister of Education claimed that the firing of 20,000 educational assistants and other school staff was temporary during the COVID-19 pandemic and that those folks would be rehired, we see that Edmonton public is being forced to fire more than 600 full-time positions, and of those, 411 are educational assistants.

1:50

Through their actions, Mr. Speaker, it is clear whose side this government is on. As helpless children needlessly suffer due to this government's cuts, they remain on the side of big donors and wealthy corporations, and now, as they plan on reopening schools, the government has refused to tell students, teachers, and the schools how they're going to be supported during this unprecedented situation.

One thing that's clear as we move forward to reopen our schools in this challenging situation, unlike any that we've ever seen, is that we will need more support for education, not less. We'll need to put back the funding taken from our schools by the UCP in their destructive first year. We will need to rehire the critical educational assistants that this Premier and this government fired, because our children deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Canada Pension Plan

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Fair Deal Panel report is a cynical political distraction from the Premier's failure to create jobs. Worse, it's got some bad ideas; mainly, withdrawing from the Canada pension plan. Now, according to a briefing note prepared by senior officials of Treasury Board and Finance delivered to the Finance minister months ago, an Alberta pension plan could start with an unfunded liability of \$133 billion. Is this Premier really so intent on settling the score with Ottawa that he's willing to gamble the retirement plans and future of millions of Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: No, I'm not. But the premise of the question is complete nonsense, which merely underscores the gross financial illiteracy of the NDP, Mr. Speaker, because that unfunded liability exists today for the Alberta portion of the Canada pension plan. It currently exists, and we are addressing that unfunded liability through our CPP premiums. The point is that if Alberta were to patriate its portion of the pension plan, because we have the youngest population, the unfunded liability would actually shrink from the portion that we currently owe to the Toronto-operated Canada pension plan.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Premier read the document because that is not what it says.

Now, the document is clear: \$133.1 billion in unfunded liability if we separated now, increased administrative costs if we separated now, more likely to create contribution volatility if we separated

now. Two months after this report was written, the Premier told Albertans he had, quote, a compelling case for CPP. Either he doesn't read the advice of his officials, he doesn't understand it, or he knowingly went out to Albertans to tell them a fairytale. Which is it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Fair Deal Panel had this memo, recommended this policy direction. We have tasked the Department of Finance with doing an in-depth technical study. Ultimately, if it is determined that this would be a net benefit to Albertans, they would be the final decision-makers in a referendum. The real question is: why is the NDP so desperately against having an in-depth study into the prospective benefits of an Alberta- rather than a Toronto-run pension plan, and why are they against allowing Albertans to decide themselves on the future of their pensions in our province.?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, there was an in-depth study, and the Premier hid it from Albertans. The panel report cost Albertans more than half a million dollars for five months' work on issues meant to distract from this Premier's failure to create jobs. However, no matter how bad the idea, if there's an expert panel, Albertans at least expect them to have all the information or to tell people about it. Instead, it was kept hidden. Nowhere is this information in the Fair Deal Panel report. Premier, you either knowingly sent your own MLAs off on a fool's errand, or you directed them to hide it from Albertans. Which is it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing quite as funny in this place as socialist desperation, to the point where they completely invent facts. What she refers to as an in-depth study is a three-and-a-half-page memo. The Department of Finance will be doing a deep dive into this issue, into the prospective costs, benefits, and structure of an Alberta-run pension. I know that the NDP thinks that Albertans can't manage their own money. They think that we have to have Justin Trudeau do it for us in Toronto. But here's the reality. The unfunded liability exists currently under the CPP and would go down if we patriated our pensions.

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

Financial Reporting by Government

Ms Notley: When it comes to managing money, it just gets better, Mr. Speaker. This government just passed a Fiscal Planning and Transparency Amendment Act, which is somewhat ironic given that in the name of pandemic management, another bill proposes to delay the Budget 2019 annual report to the dead of summer. The cynical opportunism is jaw-dropping. Those numbers were in on March 30. They tell the story of this Premier's prepandemic fiscal mismanagement, the damage of his \$4.7 billion corporate handout, the jobs he's lost, and his flawed economic projections. Instead, though, he's passing legislation to bury it. To the Premier: how bad is it? Why are you hiding it?

Mr. Kenney: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. The fiscal incompetents opposite did not want this Legislature to approve a budget for this year. They tried to stop us, in the midst of a public health crisis, from authorizing nearly \$60 billion of spending, including a half-billion-dollar pandemic surge in funding for the Department of Health. The Auditor General has indicated that their office is not in a position, because of the pandemic, to produce a report according to the normal schedule. We're going to work closely with the

Auditor General and will be coming forward with a full review later this summer.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, the longer this Premier is in power, it's less Dr. Jekyll and more Mr. Hide, H-i-d-e: hide the numbers, hide the reports, hide the truth, hide the information about CPP, hide the budget. You know, he rammed through Budget 2020 with no oversight, he refused to share the risks and the details on KXL, and now he's hiding his budget report card. Albertans shouldn't have to file FOIPs just to get the truth. Premier, you named a bill after transparency. Was that in memoriam?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, you know, it was that kind of effort to deceive and divide Albertans that ended up having her fired as the first Premier after one term in Alberta history. I know it hurts, but what Albertans want are the facts, and the facts are this: the Auditor General is not an employee of the government; the Auditor General is an independent officer of this Assembly. The Auditor General has indicated . . . [interjection] Oh, she's heckling. She's angry with the Auditor General, too, not just voters. She's also upset with the Auditor General, who, because of the pandemic, has indicated that their office is not capable of completing the review of the fiscal books at this point, but it will come forward later this summer.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me quote: I do expect we may have a longer summer session, in which case the Minister of Finance would have an opportunity to provide a robust and detailed financial update. Quote: we will certainly come forward with a robust financial statement, a financial update to the House. The Premier promised Albertans he would show more numbers in the House, but instead we've got a bill to hide the bare minimum. Why is he so opposed to transparency and accountability and just giving the facts to people? Don't call me names; just answer the question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that of course we are in favour of transparency, so much so that this is one of the only Legislatures in Canada to pass a complete budget this year, against the opposition of the NDP. We will come forward with a comprehensive fiscal report on the state of the province's finances. Doing so requires the co-operation of the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Assembly. Meanwhile the national government, by point of comparison – we're now four or five months into the fiscal year – still hasn't tabled a budget. Alberta is getting the job done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall is rising with a question.

Calgary Storm

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier stopped by my constituency this weekend to take pictures of himself with the hail damage caused during a record storm earlier this month. He offered nothing else. Yesterday a joint letter was sent to the Premier from community associations and cultural organizations calling on him to provide disaster funding, something we have been asking for for a week. To the Premier: have you read the letter? Why do you continue to ignore their calls for actual support?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I must admit to being a bit confused. Last week the NDP attacked me for not having visited northeast Calgary following the hailstorm. Today they attack me for having visited northeast Calgary following the hailstorm. This government, like every government that preceded it, including the NDP, is moving forward with the disaster resistance program legislation.

We are expecting a recommendation from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency about the potential designation of the event as a disaster, in which case emergency funds would flow, of course primarily to the city of Calgary for the cost that the city has incurred, and we look forward to continuing to work with the municipality in that respect.

2:00

Mr. Sabir: The letter from 10 northeast Calgary community groups, which I will table later today, says that constituents have heard from their insurance companies that only 20 per cent of the damage sustained in the hailstorm will be covered. Residents are also facing extremely high deductibles. The letter notes that the damage from the storm will top \$1 billion and calls for a disaster relief fund to be immediately started by this Premier. Premier, here and now, no more games: will you establish a disaster relief fund for my constituents and those affected across northeast Calgary?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we once again feel the terrible adversity that people are going through, particularly after COVID and five years of economic adversity, seeing that scale of property damage. We await the report of the Emergency Management Agency on whether this meets the legal definition of a disaster. We continue to work closely with the city and with insurance companies to make sure that they are responsive.

One thing I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, is that this government will not compel taxpayers to spend billions of dollars to bail out Toronto insurance companies. They should pay up.

Mr. Sabir: The letter notes that residents of northeast Calgary have already been hammered by COVID-19 and the slowing economy. It notes that many people were laid off at the outset of the pandemic, and most have been unable to find alternative employment. The letter states that “this hailstorm certainly has added significantly to the financial and mental stress facing our residents.” To the Premier one last time. These are unprecedented times, and people are counting on you. Will you step up? Or now that you have photos pretending you have done something, will you ignore them altogether?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing but not the least bit surprising to see the NDP once again seeking to divide people and to politicize and campaign on a disaster of this nature. We await the advice of the Emergency Management Agency on whether this constitutes a technical disaster. Obviously, emergency funds will flow for uninsurable damage and to the city of Calgary for its emergency response.

With respect to the mental health issues – and they are real; I heard that from the residents, Mr. Speaker – I will remind the member that this government has provided an additional \$53 million in support for mental health services that are related to the pandemic, more than all other provinces put together times two.

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

Judicial Ministry Appointments

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice appointed Leighton Grey to the Provincial Court Nominating Committee. The minister vigorously defended Mr. Grey in the House last week. Then on Friday Albertans learned that Mr. Grey made racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic statements and promoted some vile conspiracy theories. After Mr. Grey resigned, the minister did not have a word of criticism for these hateful and extremist views.

Premier: will you condemn Mr. Grey’s comments and apologize to Albertans for appointing him to a position of power?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this individual resigned over a post that they made online. I’ve accepted that person’s resignation. I think that that speaks for itself.

Racism is real, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot more work to do as a society. I look forward to further questions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Grey said that Black Lives Matter is a, quote, leftist lie that is paid for by Jewish businessman George Soros to pursue his, quote, evil agenda. After these comments came to light, Mr. Grey resigned. The minister argued that, quote, a diversity of views makes bodies like the PCNC stronger. Premier: why didn’t you condemn Mr. Grey’s anti-Semitism immediately, and will you apologize for your minister saying that these views make Alberta stronger?

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, you know, the issues of discrimination and racism facing the black community are not ones that I am prepared to allow for a partisan-style attack. As I’ve said previously, this is a matter that is beyond political parties and their politics. I will expect the members opposite to respect that.

Ms Ganley: If it’s beyond political parties, why won’t they condemn anti-Semitism and racism?

After having no trust that the minister is capable of confronting systemic racism in our justice system, he appointed someone who has expressed racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to help him pick judges and doesn’t understand why that’s a problem. We have to wonder what other bad appointments he has made. Premier, will you commit to a review of the Justice minister’s appointments to ensure that there are no more hateful extremists being named to positions of power in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before this House is Government Motion 24, that was tabled by our Premier to deal precisely with this particular issue. If you look around the world and look at the jurisdictions where blacks are having so much difficulty around our world, most of those jurisdictions are controlled by the left-leaning NDP and their allies. As I said, this is not a matter that I am prepared as a black man to allow the NDP to play politics with, and on this one – on this one – I am going to make sure that you guys do not play politics with blacks. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Wage Supplement for Care Facility Workers

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, residents and staff in our continuing care facilities are at the highest risk from the COVID-19 pandemic, and they need and deserve special consideration and support. I’m proud to say that our government is providing that support, a total of \$21 million a month, or \$250 million a year. That funding includes topping up the wages of health care aides by \$2 an hour, as previously announced by the minister on April 20. Can the Minister of Health please update the House: are health care aides receiving the money that our government promised them?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Employers started paying the top-up in the last month, as announced, retroactive to April 20

and for as long as the pandemic lasts. It's targeted to aides because they're the core workforce in continuing care with the greatest supply issues. It's for contracted facilities because AHS received an extra \$500 million, and it can use some of that money for the public providers. But over the past week the payouts have stopped at about 90 of these facilities because of the grievances filed by the AUPE blocking payment to their own members.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. With the greatest respect to the minister and given that I need to make sure that I heard him correctly and also given that I believe I just heard the minister say that the union is blocking payments of a wage increase to its own members, can the minister explain: is it really true that the wage top-up promised to hard-working health care aides in continuing care is being interrupted by their own union?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true. The AUPE has filed grievances against operators, which blocked payments to aides at about 90 sites. The stated reason is that the union has not signed off on the appropriate paperwork. From earlier statements by the AUPE, it may be a pressure tactic to try and get government to fund top-ups for other staff. Whatever the reason, the AUPE needs to stop blocking its members from receiving this money that our government has promised them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Given that we've been hearing a lot of misinformation coming from the members of the opposition and from the unions and given that our hard-working health care workers deserve that wage top-up and given that this is unbelievable and absolutely outrageous, to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure that the workers receive the money that they deserve and that is promised to them?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you. There's a simple way to resolve it, Mr. Speaker: a letter of understanding between the union and the employer. Most employers have letters in place, and they're continuing to pay the top-up, including employers where AUPE represents the aides. I expect all employers and unions to get this done, as most of them have. There's no excuse for any further delay. We promised aides this payment for as long as the pandemic lasts. We're funding it, and I expect the unions to help make it happen, not block it.

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

Canada Pension Plan (continued)

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like most Albertans, I've always thought that pulling out of the Canada pension plan is a terrible move, but I was stunned to learn that government of Alberta analysis has found that we will be left on the hook for \$133 billion should the Premier make this dumbfounding move. To the Minister of Finance. The government analysis around pulling out of the Canada pension plan was done in September.

Why was it never shared with Albertans, Albertans who travelled to come and talk to the Fair Deal Panel that you started? Were you worried it would dissuade them or that you might look foolish? Because you do.

2:10

The Speaker: I would caution the hon. member on making a personal insult like calling someone foolish.

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this question really points at the financial literacy of the members opposite. The reality, the bold, stark truth, is that Albertans effectively have this liability under the Canada pension plan or under a notional Alberta pension plan. The liability doesn't change. What does change is the fact that in the event Albertans chose to accept and adopt an Alberta pension plan, there would be a real possibility and opportunity for cost savings for Albertans.

Ms Gray: Given that I assume that the members of Treasury Board and Finance who wrote that briefing note are financially eligible and given that 27,000 Albertans have signed my petition at handsoffmycpp.ca and given that of those over 2,000 have asked to go before the private members' bill committee to confront this UCP government about their terrible decisions around pensions and given that the money this Premier is throwing around with hardly a care actually belongs to Albertans who have worked a lifetime to earn it, to the minister: will your government support Bill 203, that prevents pulling out of the Canada pension plan?

Mr. Toews: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the Fair Deal Panel received a copy of this memo, so they were able to take a look at all of the details in that memo along with all the other analysis around the potential opportunities and risks of an Alberta pension plan. We went to Albertans to make sure that we understand every opportunity where we could save them costs, unlike the members opposite, who drove up the costs on Albertans and job creators at every turn.

Ms Gray: Given that this information has never been presented to Albertans, even those who are interested in hearing more, and given that the Premier pledged last week to study pulling out of CPP but given that he's been sitting on a study debunking this bogus idea for nine months and given that it would seem that the Premier and his minister buried this study because it got in the way of their political agenda of driving a wedge between Albertans and Canadians, to the minister: now that the government's own analysis has been made public, will you commit here and now that you will not waste Albertans' time and money on a referendum about leaving the Canada pension plan, which isn't in Albertans' financial interests?

Mr. Toews: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say it again. Under a Canada pension plan or an Alberta pension plan this liability exists, either way. We will do a deep dive. We will produce analysis that identifies opportunities and risks for Albertans going with an Alberta pension plan, and ultimately we will let Albertans decide should we believe that there's enough potential to put the decision in front of the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning and Official Opposition House Leader.

Phone-based Supervised Drug Consumption Project

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday Alberta Health Services should have started a pilot project for Albertans who use

substances to call a peer support worker before they use. That worker would monitor their condition and call an ambulance if that Albertan overdoses, potentially saving their life. More than 11 Albertans die every week due to preventable overdose, and that number is rising. The associate minister, who has no medical training, personally overruled clinical experts at Alberta Health Services and cancelled this program. Why?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me get the record correct. We have talked to the virtual overdose response pilot program. It's paused for further consideration of program improvement, not cancellation. This government leads the nation in terms of creating more spaces for people who can access treatment and recovery. We're very proud of our work on that.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister and I are actually talking about two separate programs and given that this minister has always claimed that his hostility to supervised consumption services is driven by his concern for community impacts and given that he prohibited his review panel from even considering positive impacts such as preserving life and given that this virtual program has zero impacts on residents and businesses yet it was still cancelled, isn't it true that this political interference shows that the minister is motivated purely by his own personal prejudice against Albertans who use substances?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They can spin whatever they want, but here is a fact. As of today we announced two additional programs, the virtual opioid dependency program and another OAT gap-coverage program. Both together will add \$4 million in four years so that more people can access virtual treatment. Action speaks volumes. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Opposition House Leader has the floor.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the program was cancelled, so your actions are not equating to what you're saying they are and given that Alberta Health Services secured its own funding stream for this program and given that all pieces were in place to begin the three-year pilot project and given that this saves lives, spares families from a lifetime of grief, will the associate minister get out of the way of health care professionals, let them do their job, and restart the program?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, we are building the most robust and comprehensive recovery-oriented continuing care in the country, unlike the opposition, who were in government. They did nothing to help Albertans get out of addiction. We're going to fund detox. We're going to fund treatment. We're going to support people to move from a life of addiction into recovery.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is rising with a question.

Opioid Addiction Treatment

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was said by a constituent in one of our rural crime town halls that we don't have a crime

problem; we have a drug problem. In the larger cities, even in my constituency, there are people who are struggling with opioid addictions. They want access to treatment, and they want to recover. Unfortunately, however, there is often lack of support available to them. We need to support all Albertans when they reach out for help no matter where they live. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: how will the expansion of the virtual opioid dependency program announced today help my constituents access timely care?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the great question. I am concerned about the overdose in our province and the increase of fatalities that is related possibly to the increased use of carfentanil in the streets. That's why earlier today we announced that we're expanding access to virtual opioid dependency clinics throughout the province. We're making every way possible to increase access for Albertans to get out of addiction.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one of the challenges Albertans face when trying to access medical-assisted treatment is not having access to a health benefits plan and Albertans accessing opioid treatments need to be able to access medication in a timely manner and that previously Albertans have not been able to access these life-saving medications unless they have a benefits plan, to the associate minister: how can Albertans requiring this form of treatment get it without medical coverage, and what difference will it make in their lives?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second part of our announcement today is about this program. It's called gap coverage. We immediately opened the treatment and medication service for people who are waiting to get their Alberta health care applied for. That is an additional \$2 million that we injected into the system. This marks our continuous effort to build a full continuum of care in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister. Given that the previous government did not give Albertans a pathway to move forward after beginning on opioid treatment medications and our government has prioritized a full continuum of care to ensure Albertans, every Albertan, have the opportunity to access treatment and to begin a better life and that the ultimate goal should always be a healthy life in full recovery, to the associate minister: how are these programs going to assist Albertans in accessing other services needed to enter recovery?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the hon. member. I can't be more agreeable to you that the previous government did nothing to help Albertans get out of addiction, but we're going to change that. Today's announcement further complements the government's strategy to create 4,000 additional treatment spaces for Albertans. In this area we're leading the nation

to help people get out of addiction and live a healthy life into recovery. We're very proud of that.

Alberta Separatism

Ms Phillips: On Friday the Premier said: I don't believe you can qualify your patriotism; either you love your country or you don't. I agree. But the very next day the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat did qualify his patriotism, saying that it depends on if Canada meets his 10 demands. It's a good thing our veterans haven't similarly qualified their loyalty, Mr. Speaker. "To Alberta I owe my first loyalty," the member wrote. By the Premier, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is no patriot. How long will the people of Alberta have to tolerate the Premier providing care and feeding to separatism as a matter of government policy?

2:20

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been abundantly clear about his loyalty to this country and his dedication to the country of Canada, but we do have a big-tent party with a variety of different views on the directions of where to go. That's the difference between us and the NDP. The NDP, that member, who was part of cabinet, was accused by their own members of bullying them into positions and not allowing them to have free speech. The United Conservative Party is dedicated to an open conversation about views within our caucus and to free votes and to being able to express how we feel as members of the Legislature, but this party is dedicated to the country of Canada.

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that investors are watching and the Premier himself said Friday that separatism creates a crisis in confidence and given that we have a long and rich history of watching investors flee the province of Quebec as they have provided care and feeding to separatism within that province but the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat wrote, "an independent and sovereign Alberta would have a broad new horizon of opportunities before it," why is the Premier drifting towards a crisis of chasing away investment by refusing to confront separatism as a matter of government policy within his own government?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would like to take up the views of the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, she's more than welcome to, but belittling people who have separatist views inside our province and are frustrated with how Canada has treated Alberta and, in particular, how this current federal government has treated Albertans is not the way forward. The Premier and our party have been clear. We are dedicated to Confederation, but we are also dedicated to making sure Alberta gets the best deal that we can in Confederation and standing up for Albertans, who have often been treated wrong in Confederation. It is not wrong for Albertans to do. That does not mean that you're anti-Canadian. What that means is that we're going to stand up and get the best deal that we can inside the Confederation of Canada.

Ms Phillips: Well, given that there are a number of caucus members who have expressed anti-Canadian views – the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, for example, attended a separatist conference and said that we're close – given that the Member for Red Deer-South described our fellow Canadians as hostile parasites, given the Member for Airdrie-East said that she struggles to wave the Canadian flag – that's quite a few members so far, Mr. Speaker – has the separatist faction in the UCP achieved official party status yet?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Again, Mr. Speaker, the actions of that member right there show why she and her government were fired as the government of Alberta. Belittling people that are frustrated with how they're being treated by the federal government is not the way forward. The Premier and our party are dedicated to Confederation and are dedicated to the country of Canada. In fact, the Premier, while he was negotiating the unification of the Wildrose and the PC Party, insisted that language of that nature ended up in the agreement that founded this party that Albertans chose to govern this province. The reason Albertans chose us to is because of actions from that member right there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Technology Industry Development

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2019 Alberta saw a 40 per cent increase in start-up investment due to the investor tax credit. Entrepreneur James Lochrie stated, "The AITC is one of the primary causes of this record number. Many of the young companies that received VC funding in 2019 were born in the AITC era. My concern is that . . . more companies will die in the seed stage now." To the minister of economic development. Cutting the Alberta investor tax credit was a mistake. Will you listen to the business community and reinstate the tax credit, and if not, why not?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite are upset that we cancelled their boutique-style, heavily administrative tax credits that resulted in the government picking winners and losers and that benefited fewer than a few hundred companies. The Innovation Capital Working Group that we stood up was tasked with coming up with ways to look at best practices of attracting capital to investment start-ups. They're tasked with looking at broader based, less bureaucratic methods, and it's going to be part of our larger approach to tech and innovation that our government is working on. To quote Werner Biegler, president of Alberta Council of Technologies: the tax incentives the member is talking about didn't draw much . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has done nothing during the COVID-19 pandemic to support our tech sector and given that this is doublespeak considering the tax credits that she introduced are the exact boutique tax credits that I speak of, yet to film that applies differently than to sector-wide, given that Terry Rock and Cheryll Watson, co-chairs of the Alberta Innovation Corridor, wrote a public letter during the pandemic, quote, this crisis puts not only the companies at risk but the future of our innovation ecosystem, end quote, why is the minister doing nothing to support the innovation businesses while filling her party's pockets with taxpayers' dollars?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, a quote from Werner Biegler, president of Alberta Council of Technologies: the tax incentives didn't draw the much-needed hundreds of millions of dollars from noninvestors becoming investors, so in that sense it didn't move the needle considerably at all. Our government has

given more than \$200 million through Budget 2020 to support research, innovation, and commercialization and to develop and enhance talent, grow sectors, and leverage funding from partners in the private sector. In fact, Calgary has already seen growth in the tech sector, including being named by the 2020 LinkedIn Emerging Jobs Report as one of Canada's next big tech hubs.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview now has the call.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister so far has had nothing to offer innovative companies, including the success of 2019 tech companies – there is no credit whatsoever to that government over there; I give credit to the very businesses that worked with our government to introduce the very programs that they needed – and given that the original due date for the Innovation Capital Working Group was February 28, when will the minister finally do something to support our innovative start-ups, or is innovation just a luxury that Alberta simply cannot afford?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government gave the Innovation Capital Working Group an extension on the report. They asked for more time to do a thorough evaluation, and we gave it to them. The members opposite can preach that they care about diversification while at the same time actively protesting against one of our biggest sectors. Our investment growth strategy that we're working on is an "and" approach, not an "or" approach. It focuses on tourism, agriculture, energy, innovation, tech, aerospace and aviation, and financial services. Our government truly supports diversification.

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

Capital Plan

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our economy needs to get back on track, and Albertans need to get back to work. Decisions that governments make today to build vital infrastructure such as schools, bridges, roads, and hospitals not only get people to work today, but they play an important role in improving the quality of life of Albertans for decades to come. I often have constituents and community groups approach me advocating for projects that they believe will improve our region. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you inform the House how Albertans can make sure that their priorities are heard?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, today we launched our online consultation about the infrastructure act and the 20-year strategic capital plan. Albertans have the opportunity to let the government know how we prioritize infrastructure we build along with what they want to see built over the next 20 years. The Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche is correct. Having the right infrastructure in place will have tremendous impact on what services and programming the government will be able to provide in the years ahead. I encourage all Albertans to let their voices be heard.

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

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your answer. Given that some claim that Alberta has an infrastructure deficit and given that many communities, including communities across my riding of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche, have been awaiting schools, health care facilities, and long-term care centres for long periods of time, can the minister inform this

House how the 20-year strategic capital plan along with the infrastructure act will help ensure that Albertans have the essential infrastructure they rely upon and that politics will not get in the way of everyday people's priorities?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important issue about the input I am seeking; namely, how do we ensure that there are objective processes in place to make sure the infrastructure we build is the infrastructure we most need? That will be the goal of the infrastructure act and the 20-year strategic capital plan. We want to hear from industry people, tradespeople, everyday Albertans about how we can get the politics out of the process and focus on Alberta's infrastructure needs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that these important projects are required to take a great of capital to proceed and given that the federal government, unfortunately, does not want to help Alberta's energy producers in a meaningful way, yet they seem interested to help us support infrastructure projects, to the minister: what conversations are happening with the federal government to ensure that Alberta gets support for building critical infrastructure projects?

2:30

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, along with the consultations we launched today, I continue to press my federal colleague Catherine McKenna to get federal infrastructure money out the door. I'm sending out approval letters as soon as they come for close to \$900 million in project spending in 38 constituencies. We know that Alberta has given Ottawa more than its fair share over the years, and getting our fair share of federal infrastructure funding is a priority for me and our government. I'm pleased to report that many communities across Alberta will see . . .

Elder Abuse Programs

Ms Sigurdson: Edmonton reported 291 cases of elder abuse last year, a 40 per cent increase over the year prior. The city's seniors protection partnership, a collaboration between city police, the municipality, and multiple nonprofit organizations, is overwhelmed. They have been hit hard by the cuts to seniors' community grants. These organizations have been critical, and while they take the UCP cuts, the government handed a \$4.7 billion break to corporations. To the minister: why do big corporations get all the breaks, but the organizations that keep seniors safe get nothing?

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

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This newspaper article clearly indicates that the number of reports of elder abuse have, I quote, increased due to COVID, and those who care about them are speaking out; that is the first step to ending the abuse. End quote. I encourage everyone who may be experiencing elder abuse to continue to speak out and get help. We have the family violence information line, 310.1818, Alberta 211, and our website to help all the abused elderly who need help.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the data presented shows that 76 per cent of Edmonton seniors who experienced abuse were abused by family, caregivers, or others in a position of trust or authority and given that disturbing human rights abuse reports are increasing from rural communities that are disproportionately affecting indigenous people, to the minister: how specifically will you

address abuse of older indigenous people? Minister, please be specific as I'll be sharing your answer online.

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

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Alberta seniors – it doesn't matter if they are indigenous; they are all Albertans to this government. They all require help. We help them all. The first duty of government is to protect public safety. To all seniors in Alberta, again, to you: there are elder abuse toolkits that will be available, developed and co-ordinated as a community response to help communities, all communities. Organizations in the region developed the local response to end elder abuse. We are . . .

Ms Sigurdson: Given that our NDP government acknowledged this seniors human rights issue and took action against elder abuse through a co-ordinated community response grant program totalled at \$1.5 billion for 31 community organizations and given that the community grant budget cuts under the UCP total \$1 million and given that the seniors population is growing in Alberta, and with it the risk of elder abuse also grows, to the minister: yes or no? Right here and now will you reinstate the funding for the elder abuse programs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government cares about our seniors, and we issued \$30 million in funding to help our seniors. I don't know what the members are talking about, that we are not helping. We will continue helping. We will continue to do that. Stop making seniors afraid.

Thank you.

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

Capital Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this UCP government came to power, they cancelled several large infrastructure projects in order to pay for the billions of dollars in handouts to already profitable corporations. Now, these cancellations included the superlab here in Edmonton, MSI funding to municipalities, and they also cut funding to the Calgary green line by 86 per cent over the next four years. To the minister: why does your government have such a disdain for these projects that will get people back to work when over 365,000 Albertans are looking for jobs right now?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we've demonstrated quite clearly that we have a love for infrastructure projects, even during this time of COVID pandemic and one of the worst economic situations in a hundred years. Just last Friday the Premier and I announced another \$200 million worth of expenditures for STIP, rural local roads and bridges projects, as well as wastewater and First Nations tie-in projects. I know that the NDP may not like us spending money on things that matter to Albertans, but we do. We listen to Albertans. They tell us that they want infrastructure projects, and we are busy building them.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that the minister has failed to address any of the projects I've listed here, any of the projects that were fully funded before, and given that our government funded the Calgary cancer centre, fully funded the Calgary green line, and was in the initial stages of building the superlab and given that we know the importance of these projects

in creating great new jobs in our modern economies and given that this government likes to suddenly claim that infrastructure spending is a good thing when it comes to putting people back to work, will the minister commit here and now to funding the Edmonton superlab, restoring MSI funding, and releasing the full funding for the Calgary green line today?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, we campaigned in the last election about the Edmonton superlab, and we did what we said, that we were going to cancel that project. Apart from that project, if the member is open and able to see, there are projects built all over the province. We are busy building the projects, creating the jobs, and building the critical infrastructure that will position us well for recovery in upcoming years. We are busy building.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it sounds like the answer is no, none of these projects will be moving forward, and given that this government refuses to commit to any of these projects and given that the Premier has changed his tune yet again by saying that a fiscal reckoning is coming for Albertans and more cuts need to happen while simultaneously holding out his hands for a bailout from his friend and donor Justin Trudeau, to the minister: does that fiscal reckoning apply to your friends and insiders or just to working Albertans and the thousands of Albertans hoping to find work on one of these infrastructure projects?

Mr. Toews: Well, Mr. Speaker, the difference between this government and the members opposite is that this government knows what a good investment is. The members opposite burned money like it was water, pushed the cost of delivering government through the roof during the four years they governed. We're investing in infrastructure projects that will provide value to Albertans today and for future generations and put Albertans to work today. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

Home-prepared Food Sale

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just recently the government announced that they changed Alberta's food regulations to allow the selling of home-prepared, low-risk foods from home and at special events. Now, in my constituency the county of Camrose normally hosts up to six farmers' markets alongside many, many community activities and events. My question to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: what will this change mean for my constituents and the markets the county supports?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These changes open up additional opportunities for constituents across Alberta. Low-risk, home-prepared foods can now be sold from home, including online or mail order sales, and from special events as well as farmers' markets. More and more Albertans are looking to buy local to support our communities, especially through COVID-19. These changes will help to open a new low-risk, home-prepared food industry in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister for the answer. Given that our government is focused on reducing red tape and given that our government wants to make life better for Albertans and given that Albertans all across the province want to be able to sell their delicious home-cooked meals and given that selling servings of meals is a staple of community events province-wide, again to the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction: can he explain how this removes red tape burden off the backs of Albertans and how exactly it supports job creation?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to reducing unnecessary red tape by one-third to reduce costs, speed up approvals, and make life better for Albertans. These changes support an alternative source of household income for Albertans without them having to worry about investing in a commercial kitchen. These are huge cost savings for all Albertans in the locally produced food industry. That sounds like a tasty red tape reduction to me.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister for the answer. Given that Albertans are becoming more and more interested in shopping local, as the associate minister stated, and given that the need for food safety standards is just as important if not more so during the current pandemic and given that many community gatherings had to be cancelled or postponed due to the public health orders implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19, can the associate minister assure my constituents and all Albertans that this isn't reducing necessary regulations?

2:40

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, low-risk foods do not require refrigeration, including items such as baked goods, jams, jellies, candies, pickles, and food cereals. High-risk foods – that is, foods containing meat, poultry, seafood, and raw milk – will continue to be prohibited. The feedback I've heard across Alberta is that they're very much in favour of this. Home-cooked food always makes life better, and we're looking forward to doing this.

Keystone XL Pipeline Project

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, there is optimism in my riding of Sherwood Park around the March 2020 announcement for Keystone and getting Alberta energy to market. Shovels were quickly in the ground, and jobs were created, getting Albertans back to work. To the Minister of Energy: can you please provide an update to this House on how construction is progressing and when we expect the pipeline to be operational?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After more than a decade of delays the KXL pipeline is now under construction. It's under construction on both this side of the border and in the United States. The border crossing has already been constructed, with pipe in the ground. Construction is being staged by the proponent, TC Energy, so that it will be finished in 2023, which is important because it's an important part of Alberta's relaunch strategy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you to the minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Keystone pipeline requires support not only from our province and country but also from the United States and given that there is scheduled to be a U.S. presidential election this year and given that Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic candidate, has spoken out in opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, advising that he would cancel the presidential permit, to the Minister of Energy: what are we doing to prepare in the event that Keystone XL has the presidential support withdrawn?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rather than speculating about the outcome of the U.S. election, our government is taking action to ensure that the Keystone XL pipeline is built by 2023. After more than a decade of delay this pipeline is needed now more than ever. With global uncertainty, price destruction, market realignment this project is necessary for the United States and for Canada. Their refineries need our oil as much as we need access to those refineries.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Keystone XL is an important project in my riding of Sherwood Park and throughout our province that will get Alberta energy to market and given that this project required the investment of our province to get off the ground at this time, can the Minister of Energy please advise why it is important to make this investment at this critical time?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made this critical and important investment to ensure that the KXL pipeline gets built after more than a decade of delay. This project was approved by the National Energy Board in 2010, 10 years ago. It was supposed to be in service by 2012, 2013. We're getting it built. It will produce \$30 billion in royalties, at least 7,000 jobs in Alberta, and it's critical for North American energy security.

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

Members' Statements

(continued)

Calgary Storm

Mr. Toor: Mr. Speaker, with the COVID-19 pandemic still at the forefront of our provincial conversation we must also take the time to acknowledge other hardships facing Albertans. Last week the city of Calgary and the surrounding region were hit by the devastating hailstorm and flash floods. Northeast Calgary, where my constituency is located, took the brunt of the storm, and many residents have experienced damage to their homes and other property. This could not have come at a worse time for many people. This is just another layer on top of an already rough year.

With that being said, Calgary is no stranger to severe storms, and I'm very proud of my community for their resiliency. I have heard many great stories about neighbours helping neighbours, from shoveling ice away from roadways to helping patch up shattered windows. Everyone in the community did their part. Our first responders have also done a fantastic job in assisting the community through rescuing stranded drivers, redirecting traffic to

safer routes, and draining flooded streets. I thank them once again for their tireless efforts.

If there is one positive thing we can take away from this devastating storm, it is that there have been no reported injuries among residents. Property can be replaced, but our health and safety will always be of the utmost importance. Just like with the flooding back in 2013, I have no doubt that Calgarians will bounce back from this. The solidarity of our communities grows with every hit we take, and I am emboldened by the spirit of Calgarians shown on a daily basis.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Premier for visiting some of the damaged homes late last week. I know that meant a lot to my constituents.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice on a few things today. First of all, I rise to give oral notice on Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, sponsored by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

I also rise to give notice on Bill 27, Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020, also sponsored by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

I would also like to provide oral notice of Government Motion 26, to be put on the Order Paper in my name: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly grant leave pursuant to Standing Order 57(1)(b) to the Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee to meet during the hours the Assembly is sitting.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide oral notice of Government Motion 27, also to be put on the Order Paper in my name: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly grant leave pursuant to Standing Order 57(1)(b) to the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee to meet during the hours the Assembly is sitting.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my question I referred to a letter that was sent by the community organizations and associations from northeast Calgary to the Premier. I want to table the requisite number of copies of that letter. That letter is essentially requesting relief for disaster-affected areas.

The Speaker: The Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I have three tablings. The first is a copy of a public petition to keep River lot 56 public, and I will put those in the basket. There are a total of 1,721 signatures.

The second is an article in St. Albert *Today*, and it's Riverlot 56: A Primer, from March 16, 2020.

And then a really great historical piece that was in *T8N* magazine in St. Albert, May 2017, and it's entitled Then & Now: Riverlot 56.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table some documents relating to my private member's Bill 201, Strategic

Aviation Advisory Council Act. I have the requisite number of copies of the listing of the flight training schools which I referenced during debate last week.

I also have letters of support from numerous organizations. The first one is from the Alberta Soaring Council, who spend most of their time in the clouds. We also have a letter of support from Confidair Aviation Group Ltd, from their president, Jayme Hepfner, advising of strong support for the bill, and also from BAS Air Corporation, also pledging strong support for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:50

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View I have the requisite number of copies of an article labelled *The Anti-Semitism Lurking Behind George Soros Conspiracy Theories*.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's time for Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 201

Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to move third reading of Bill 201.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave of the Assembly today, of course, to move third reading of private member's Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act.

We've spoken in debate about the purpose of the bill, the council's duties and powers, which include the ability to receive and hear submissions from individuals and groups relating to the council's purpose. I would now like to reflect on who might be given consideration for appointment to this council by way of sort of demonstrating the breadth of this bill and the support that we have thus far from the community, from the sector in terms of their excitement about this bill. Of course, many individuals, companies, organizations, and labour groups that I have spoken to are extremely excited about this initiative with respect to the potential impact on their operations and sectoral opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I've found that almost every week I'm getting calls from new groups and new individuals across this province, whether it be private flight schools, whether it be some of the smaller airports looking for economic development opportunities, whether it be technology companies that are involved with RPAS and UAS and UAVs – of course, we talked about what those acronyms are – essentially the drone technology that is out there and that is being developed in this province at a pace that, I think, reflects what's been happening in the oil and gas industry in the past, some of the utilization there. The fact is that this technology can be used across so many different platforms.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'm going to reflect on a few of the letters of support received and the optimism and excitement around what the strategic aviation advisory council can be and the breadth of representation that will optimally be achieved in the appointment of the members. From the Air Cadets, their Alberta chair, Rhonda Barraclough, says:

We offer a program for young people interested in the aviation industry and this Bill supports youth and education. The Air Cadet movement across the country is also trying to develop opportunities for youth to be involved and ultimately employed in the aviation field. This Bill helps support our objectives, and grows employment opportunities in Alberta.

Again, engagement of youth.

I've had some dealings with another group called Elevate Aviation, which is a group which encourages young women to get involved in the aviation sector as well. They've been having some excellent webinars that I've been attending during some of the COVID-19 breaks, and they work very hard to bring people – the proponent of that is actually a retired air traffic controller, but she takes people into aircraft maintenance and pilot training and so many different factors within the industry.

I've had a lot of assistance from the Alberta Aviation Council, from their chair, Bram Tilroe, and their secretary, Brian Andrus, who is joining us here today, actually, in the gallery. Thank you to Brian and to many of his group for their support, their insights, and how they've helped us through this time to really come up with the impetus for this bill. They say:

Our organization supports [Alberta] in its initiative in developing the Strategic Alberta Aviation Council with its focus on providing direction for the aviation stakeholders in this province. We welcome the opportunity to utilize our [membership's expertise] to assist the [province] in developing a Made in Alberta strategy.

Thank you to them for that.

Again, we have the rich history of the Alberta Aviation Museum. We have the Hangar Museum in Calgary. We have so many other ones. We have Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, actually. I think it's in Wetaskiwin. That's where it is.

The Remington-Alberta museum, if I'm not mistaken – is that correct?

An Hon. Member: Reynolds.

Mr. Gotfried: Reynolds-Alberta. You see? I'd better brush up. I'd better come and visit.

Their president, Kris Schinke, says:

The strategic focus that is planned to ensure the sector remains strong, diverse and sustainable is a welcome one, from our perspective, as an aviation museum.

Once again, you have our full support.

The Alberta Soaring Council, which I just presented: of course, that is the gliders and the soaring community, which actually is a start for many people in the aviation sector. No engine is required. A lot of the cadets train on those across the province. They mention the

recreational and competitive soaring programs that have been successful in developing athletes, introducing the public to aviation, providing a recreational opportunity for youth, disabled and seniors and contributing to local economies.

... We enthusiastically support the establishment of the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council and the opportunities that it will bring to supporting and growing the aviation industry in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, Angel Flight Alberta is a group of pilots who actually take people to medical appointments across this province on a volunteer basis. Quote:

Our members are pilots and aviation enthusiasts from around the province. The looming pilot and aircraft maintenance engineer shortage concerns our members and we support this initiative to address these shortages. Also, we realize that without support many of the small community airports in the province will suffer.

The aviation industry is very important to the economy of Alberta and must be heard and supported.

They follow up with:

The creation of the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council will give the aviation sector an avenue to create, promote and recommend efforts that will enable it to meet future demands and requirements.

We also have Aurora Aerial Alberta Inc. This is an organization which is very much focused on the drone technology:

Aurora Aerial... understand the required economic developments for the Aviation & Aerospace industry in Alberta, which can be a major critical economic catalyst. A Strategic Aviation Advisory Council would provide important direction on working in the eco-chain diversifying our economy and creating jobs along with private aviation partners.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the quotes that we have here. Further, from Cavalier Aviation, Jayme Hepfner:

Cavalier... is one of the... few Authorized Cessna Service [Facilities] in Canada, providing maintenance and support to the Mount Royal University Aviation Degree program and the Springbank Air Training College,

two of the larger training facilities in the province.

Cavalier Aviation... strongly supports Bill 201 and the establishment of [the council].

A little further south, from the city of Lethbridge, from Mayor Chris Spearman, this is on behalf of city council. They actually passed a motion in support of this bill.

The City of Lethbridge understands the importance of having an aviation industry in Alberta that can be an economic catalyst. A Strategic Aviation Advisory Council would provide important direction on how we can best create jobs, provide training, diversify our economy, develop airport lands and work with private aviation partners.

The City of Lethbridge strongly supports Bill 201.

Delphi Aeronautics, another one here as well.

Edmonton Airshow, from Richard Skermer, their president and CEO:

The opportunity in front of Alberta is immense, and my hope is that the council is a collaborative, future-focused, business driven, deliverables-based, and metrics-measured organization driven to excel. Most of all, it must be inclusive of new, aggressive, and entrepreneurial voices if we are ever to regain our aerospace excellence.

With reference to the proposed rebranding of the Edmonton Airshow to the Alberta international air show and trade fair, another great opportunity for the province:

The concept has always been one of utilizing a national-scale tourism event to set up the backdrop for an economic diversification and provincial marketing summit to showcase Alberta's incredible opportunities in areas outside of oil and gas, all while still promoting the use of our energy sector to power the growth of our region, and helping to cement Alberta's economic leadership position in Canada.

That's the kind of innovation we have across this province, Madam Speaker, which is going to be driven through the strategic aviation advisory council, to provide those very focused recommendations for the future.

Mount Royal University aviation, from Elizabeth Evans, the dean of the Bissett School of Business:

In 2020, the MRU Aviation Program is celebrating its 50th Anniversary. We have a proud history of training commercial pilots in service of the demand from a vibrant Alberta airline industry. The shortage of pilots is well documented and with significant increase in prospective students, MRU Aviation is positioning itself to serve the sector as a pillar of the Alberta Advantage.

The formation of the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council (SAAC) is seen as integral to seizing the opportunities that exist today to stimulate employment and growth. Equally important is the longer view to establishing Alberta as a national and international leader in aviation [once again].

We have had that position in the past, Madam Speaker.

The breadth of the industry and its network into technology, logistics and supply chain amplifies the potential for [the council] to impact the future [of the] Alberta [economy].

West Peace Aviation president, who is retired, Major Lloyd Sherk:

The Association's members are pilots and aviation enthusiasts from the south Peace Region. The looming pilot and aircraft maintenance engineer shortage concerns our members and we support this initiative to address these shortages

in Alberta and across the world.

Also, we realize that without support many of the small community airports in the province will suffer. The aviation industry is very important to the economy of Alberta and must be heard from and supported.

And that could be done well through the council, Madam Speaker.

I have a long list here of other companies that are expressing support. Pegasus Imagery, Cole Rosentreter, CEO, who is an expert in the remotely piloted aircraft systems to deliver intelligence and data services and skill of modern industry and government challenges. We've talked a little bit about some of those opportunities: utilizing drone technology in agriculture and forestry, in safety and emergency training but also in many different ways we haven't even thought of. Of course, UPS might be delivering parcels to your doorstep someday soon, and there are some companies looking to do some pilot projects right here in Alberta.

3:00

Peraton Canada Corporation, Jim Gillespie, their vice-president:

Peraton's culture of innovation is evident in our long-standing history of expertise and partnerships within Canada's defence community. We provide innovative next-generation cooperative military advancement for the defence and aerospace industry. We drive growth through innovation and invest in aligning our overall business strategy to meet the needs of our customers . . . Our robust and reliable mission sustainment capability is a testament to our success and assures each mission is [complete].

They're very pleased. They said that they're very pleased to support this mission and wish us the best success in moving this agenda forward in collaboration with organizations such as that.

RCAF Association, Tom Sand, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired). Madam Speaker, this is one of the reasons . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt you.

I'm just wondering if there are any other members that are wishing to speak to Bill 201. The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise here today and speak to third reading of Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. Before I begin talking about the bill itself, I first want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek has put into this incredible piece of legislation. I think this is a great example of when a private member gets an opportunity to put a bill to the floor and it combines his passion and knowledge into a bill for something that's really going to benefit the province as a whole.

Speaking to that, in the past election it was exactly that. Albertans sent a clear message that they wanted a government that would create good policy that would lead to economic growth and the restoration of the Alberta advantage. I view Bill 201 as a huge

opportunity for economic growth in an industry that has, really, for a lot of years had untapped potential. There's so much unlimited growth that I think can be done in this industry.

Bill 201 seeks to establish, of course, a strategic aviation advisory council, a council that will provide key recommendations on improving the aviation industry as a whole. Its sole purpose will be to build on, of course, Alberta's rich aviation history, devise strategies to increase the unlimited potential of the world-class aviation and aerospace sector here in Alberta.

The way that this bill is set up, this council will be comprised of many various sectors across the entire province from corner to corner. It's going to include everything from airlines, commercial aviation, pilot training institutions and programs, aerospace engineering, emerging technologies and then, you know, really bringing the whole mix into Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I think this is touching on just a real handful of the sectors that this advisory council could include. This council is going to undertake the research and analysis necessary to build on this industry as a whole, combining all these different parts of the industry, which are very unique and specific. They all have their own challenges, and they all have things that they feel that could be done better within the province. They'll look to consult with key groups and stakeholders of the aviation and the aerospace industry.

Now, with that – and I think this is really important – I like the way that this bill has been structured, Bill 201, in the fact that people talk about red tape, and that's one thing that we don't want to create here in our province. I think that this bill has done a very good job of creating an advisory council without overburdening it and overburdening the government with red tape. This committee strategically works over the year to build these strategies, and then with that, they file an annual report filled with recommendations to the minister and the government on how to improve the industry as a whole. I think that's crucial.

You know, I think back to many, many years ago. My father started one of the first and what ended up being one of the largest privately owned ambulance services in North America, and with that, one of the things that he really struggled to develop, which was very pioneer back in the day, was air medevacs. This was something that he worked on very diligently with Kenn Borek Air and Sunwest charters at the time, but it was very difficult. This was something that wasn't regularly done. They ran into a lot of hurdles with the government regulations and everything, and they did not have anything even close to this. They had no place to go to be able to show the government what the potential was for this and the growth that was needed and the information they needed to be able to provide a better service for the health care industry through air medevacs across the province. I think that's where the strength is. This is just one small example of, like I said before, this untapped potential and what this could be for our aviation industry.

You know, as many of my other colleagues have mentioned, this province, the province of Alberta, has a hugely, incredibly rich aviation history. Of course, many of the airports in the province were created out of necessity to assist the war effort during World War II, and, of course, others have been developed by the government as part of an overall strategy for transportation, trade, and shipping in Canada and within our province. I think Bill 201 is going to help be able to bring all those airports together with a collaborative strategy to be able to provide that strength that we need, especially now, moving forward.

As well, with that, we've also seen local municipalities and local individuals step up to build local airports for their citizens. In my riding of Highwood we're actually very lucky. This was how we ended up with the Okotoks Air Ranch Airport, which is CFX2. Of course, it was built as part of a community which is called air ranch

in Okotoks. Of course, the effort was expanded in 2016, when the airport was actually shut down for a year, in which they did a lot of extensive improvements within the facility, and today the airport is now a very important service for all the individuals of Okotoks and the Highwood area.

Madam Speaker, located, of course, at this Okotoks Air Ranch Airport we are very, very fortunate to have the Calgary Okotoks flight school, licensed by Transport Canada. The Calgary and Okotoks flight school is providing a flying experience that is fun, accessible, and affordable for everybody, which I think is very important. We have to continue to encourage, to be able to find a way to engage the youth and get them into aviation and find an affordable way to broaden this so that people have the opportunity to be able to get their pilot's licence.

With that, I'd like to take just a quick minute to recognize the amazing work that Tim Ulmer has done with the Calgary Okotoks flight school. I mean, he's set out to create his own flight school to give back to the community that he loves and, of course, provide that opportunity to students to have, you know, a chance to be able to have as much training and time in the air with the lowest cost possible. He recognized the importance of this essential service for the entire province and our entire country, so he's trying to be able to make it more affordable and give opportunities to the youth to be able to do this.

The global health pandemic of COVID-19 has restricted domestic and international travel. This has resulted, unfortunately, in a really low demand for the aviation sector at this time, and like many other sectors the aviation industry has been hit hard, really hard, due to this global health pandemic. As we prepare for the next stage of the relaunch strategy and devise strategies to be able to support our industries that have been hit hard across the province and across our country as a whole, I believe that the creation of an aviation advisory council is a key step to assisting our aviation industry in their economic recovery, which, I think we can all agree, is going to be one of the most difficult. We're still seeing limited travel internationally, so we've got to be able to find a way to support them, and I think this is a great, great way to be able to support them as we move forward with this.

We get it. While Bill 201 is just a small step, it's a very important one nonetheless. We've got to show the support for our aviation and give them the opportunity to be able to make sure their voice is heard in a constructive manner, that new policies and strategies can be built for this industry and this province moving forward, which I think is going to have a massive economic benefit for the province as a whole. Also, they can be working a lot of job creation, too.

3:10

Madam Speaker, Bill 201 is an opportunity to support the development of a very fast-growing industry in the world. This industry is essential, of course, to tourism, filming, forest fire prevention and control, agriculture, and so many other industries, like I spoke about before, even fixed-wing and rotor-wing medical transfers. This industry already employs over tens of thousands of Albertans, and this advisory council will help build on those numbers. I think we can touch on that a little bit.

I mean, I'm a red seal tradesman and a sheet metal worker by trade. A lot of people don't understand that that's the trade designation that you have to get if you want to work on an aircraft. I'm very excited that hopefully this advisory council will be able to build on strategies to bring even more of those jobs, whether it be in manufacturing, that are imperative to our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 201 in third reading? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and speak to Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I've enjoyed the debate so far, and I've enjoyed learning a lot about this topic. I want to just thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who's poured so much personal passion into this project and into this bill.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if you follow the member on Facebook, but I've enjoyed seeing his aviation-themed apparel for Bill 201 debates, including his airplane tie and some of the different pairs of cufflinks that he's got. While I realize that the average Albertan cannot get the ability to have the camera zoom in on these things, it has added to the debate, and I commend the member on his very on-brand clothing choices.

Certainly, this bill is very on brand for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who spent two decades working in the airline industry, and Bill 201 reflects the insights that he's gained and the challenges that he's experienced first-hand as a member of that industry, so it's only fitting that as he has come into this Chamber and has had an opportunity to present a private member's bill, he would go back to his roots and would look at a way to take Alberta and move it forward in an industry that he is completely familiar with.

Now, we understand that tragic events like 9/11 or even COVID-19 have changed this industry and have changed Albertans and this industry, certainly, moving forward as we look at the impacts that have been alluded to in this House already from COVID-19. So I believe that Bill 201 is timely in that it's going to critically impact this industry moving forward.

The creation of this council is going to harness the advice of the industry, the experts of the industry across every sector of the industry so that as we move forward into this new brave world that we are facing, we have the capacity to meet the challenges of the day by harnessing the experience of the people that are involved in that industry on this council. You know, it's always a good thing to bring people of experience together, and that's exactly what this council is going to do. Whether it's commercial airliners, the pilots to the engineers or to the emergency medical operators, from consumers to tourism professionals: all will find their place on this council.

Indeed, if we look at section 6(3)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), it talks about airlines or commercial aviation. We'll have individuals from the following sectors:

- (a) airlines or commercial aviation;
- (b) aerodrome, airport or air-navigation authorities;
- (c) economic development, trade or tourism [authorities];
- (d) pilot-training institutions and programs;
- (e) aircraft maintenance training institutions . . . ;
- (f) aerospace engineering or emerging technology;
- (g) search and rescue . . . ;
- (h) emergency management, agriculture or forestry.

All of these will have the opportunity to be on this council and to provide the expert advice that we need moving into the future in Alberta, and that can only make for a stronger, more vibrant, and more robust aviation industry in the province of Alberta. The aviation industry has broadened its scope, and these representatives from the various sectors will be represented on this council. The comprehensive nature of sectoral representation is why I believe this council will be so effective.

Now, the council is being given a job in this bill. If we turn in this bill to section 4(a), we see that they are called to research and to analyze information from aviation and aerospace-related services, they're called to consult with key sectoral corporations and

organizations, associations, and institutions, and they're called to prepare and submit to the minister an annual report that will contain recommendations in respect of improving aviation and a report on progress in respect to the previous year's recommendations. These all just make so much common sense. You can see the value of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's experience in this industry in the crafting in this bill. These are all very common-sense recommendations for this council to be able to move forward on and, I believe, will help Alberta as we move forward.

One area is related to the idea of strategic planning for economic growth, tourism, and development. For any of us that have lived through the last four-and-a-half, five years, we can see the wisdom of doing this in the aviation sector of our economy. As our economy begins to reopen, I'm optimistic that the role of aviation in our economic recovery will become more and more important and obvious to us as we take a look at it. Obviously, these sectors have been hit hard by the drastic drop in passenger traffic and air travel, so while I cannot make, you know, any real predictions moving forward on how quickly we'll rebound, I'm confident that this advisory council will be a key part of this recovery.

Another area of focus will be in the development of research and technology and training, as we mentioned in the bill. Again, I'm looking forward to the recommendations that will result when considering this. Working to ensure that aviation subsectors can develop and adapt and respond to the demands of our ever-changing world is going to be essential.

I know that just outside of my constituency and the constituency of Leduc-Beaumont is the Edmonton International Airport, YEG. On there is an organization called ACAMP. ACAMP is an advanced technology development group. It's an industry-led group, and part of their job is working with drones, specifically autonomous systems. They have developed a land vehicle that patrols around YEG completely autonomously. One of the areas that they're working on with regard to aviation is autonomous drones that will be able to fly, out-of-sight drones, so that they can actually do things like measuring methane on pipelines. This would be the kind of research and technology and training that this council could oversee and could help to promote and could move Alberta into a 21st-century understanding of aviation. The breadth of experience represented on this council will be important, and it will help in making the recommendations that will make our aviation industry more relevant in moving into the future.

One of the things that's going to be interesting is to see how this council can help to support agriculture when it comes to aviation services and the infrastructure in agriculture. I can remember sitting down, again, with the folks from ACAMP and talking about the role of drones and moving forward in agriculture. We just marked Farmer's Day in this province. You know, we've got a proud history of agriculture in our province, and agricultural aviation is going to be a key part moving into the future in agriculture. These services are used and going to be used all over the province in the process and the production and the distribution of our agricultural products.

For instance, we could take a drone; we can fit it with the appropriate infrared cameras and cameras that will actually be able to measure and see the development of a crop in the field and whether it needs more or less fertilizer or water or whether a pesticide is appropriate. They can measure from the air, with these autonomous systems, exactly where farmers need to go as far as producing the best crop possible. So agriculture aviation is going to be a key part of our future in Alberta.

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These services are going to be important as this council can oversee and help direct and move forward and make recommendations to the

provincial government as to how we can help move forward, not subsidize, these particular forces in agriculture. The provisions of this bill are quite detailed, so I wanted to take the time just to highlight a few of the aspects that were of interest to me as I looked at how this council is going to operate.

Again I wanted to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for the work that he's done on this bill. I know it's been said many times before, but I think it bears repeating, so thank you. Introducing a private member's bill is a rare opportunity, and I'm always glad to see a member's personal passions demonstrated in their bills. The preamble of Bill 201 says that the bill is meant to build on "Alberta's rich aviation history and potential," and I couldn't agree more.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to add some final thoughts around Bill 201, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act. I would of course like to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this bill forward, something that I know has been a passion of his over the last couple of decades. Perhaps later on I'll get the opportunity to maybe meet some of those stakeholders in the drone industry because I would like to learn how to do better than to fly my drone into my lilac bush in my backyard. Hopefully, I'll get the opportunity to learn that a little bit.

I'm happy to rise in support today, and I'm hoping that my comments will be taken very, very seriously by the government for the benefit of the member's Bill 201 here. When I look at this bill, I think it is an opportunity for the province to grab a hold of diversification, and I believe, you know, it seems like there's more opportunity for diversification in Bill 201 than, quite frankly, I've seen the government provide opportunities for diversification. So I do commend the member for his work on that because I know that as a private member the member doesn't have a lot of resources to be able to go out and do widespread consultations like, for instance, say, the government would be able to do. But based on the documents that you tabled for supporters' feedback on the bill, I think that consultation process has been very, very remarkable. Well done on that.

Around the structure of the council itself I would offer some advice to the government that they don't take this as an opportunity to provide partisan appointments. The reason I say that: you know, for instance, we can see that the Health Advocate was definitely a partisan appointment because the individual really didn't have any kind of background within health. With the list that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has provided, there is a lot of expertise there, and we should afford them the opportunity to populate this council and bring forward those recommendations.

I guess the other advice that I would offer to the government around the work that this council will do is I think, as I said, there's a lot of wealth of knowledge that will be contained with this, actually, probably a wealth of information. We can't accommodate all the positions available, which is unfortunate, but I think that through the membership they will be able to consult with those forms of information to form recommendations to the government. I don't want to see these recommendations be treated sort of like what we've seen as of late. As a matter of fact, just this afternoon here in question period, talking about opportunities to create diversification, they were referred to simply as boutique methods of creating opportunity in the province. My hope is that this council's recommendations will be taken very, very seriously as opportunities to grow diversification within the province of Alberta.

The other thing that I would like to point out. You know, it's great that the associate minister is in the Chamber now. I'm hoping that this won't be created as an opportunity to go and cut red tape blindly in order to accommodate this bill. I mean, I suppose you could characterize the creation of this advisory council as red tape, but I don't want to see it used as an excuse to try to accommodate the whole "one in, one out" theory. That would not, I think, do justice to Bill 201 if that were to happen.

I guess, finally, I don't want to see the government simply take this bill, put it on the shelf, and it then creates a dust carrier, never to see the light of day. Again, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has done a lot of work on this. I think it's an opportunity for Alberta to tap into an industry that is untapped at this time, and we need to take advantage of that and not have it simply sit on a shelf somewhere.

I guess, as a final last story, I know that the member had mentioned about museums. Of course, I've had the opportunity as an MLA to visit the museum that, well, would be beside the old municipal airport here in Edmonton. I must say that, you know, climbing into some of those aircraft, I don't know how some of those pilots did it back in the day. They are not comfortable in any way, shape, or form, but I guess they got the job done back then.

I would highly recommend – if there are any members that might be sitting on the fence with regard to Bill 201, I would hopefully be able to nudge them to support Bill 201 going forward. This is an opportunity to create a lot of activity around diversification. I will again thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this forward and, of course, recommend that all members of the House support Bill 201 in third reading here in the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll just take this opportunity to remind the member that we do not express the presence or the absence of any members in this House, which I knew was not your intent, totally accidental.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 201 in third reading? I'm going to go this way. Sorry. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know you have to take fairness. This one is an exciting one when we have both members of government caucus and the Official Opposition wanting to jump up. It's a hot topic, and obviously we all agree on it. Again to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek: thank you so much for bringing this forward.

Now, we've talked about a lot of the technicalities and all the industries around it. I just want to give you an example of what happened in my constituency this weekend. I had a chance to take our Premier out and show him God's country, as I like to say. First, we started in Mayerthorpe country, up by Sangudo. We looked at some agriculture. The second one: we stopped by a little diner on the way back. We were on the way to our third stop, which was the Villeneuve Airport, then followed up again with a place out in Acheson for industrial equipment, looking to service and sales and then potential manufacturing. I kind of did a little Facebook post on it. I said that when we're talking about economic diversification, yeah, we got it, and we have it in bucketsful out in our area.

The aviation community here has been so undersold for a number of years. It's bold. We've got to think big again. When I was talking to the Premier and I'm giving my, you know, 30-second elevator pitch, I'm saying: "Premier, this could be Wichita north. You've heard me talk about Texas north in the culture." So now he's kind of looking at me, and he's going, "Wichita north: what do you mean by that?" Well, Wichita, Kansas, was literally the birthplace of

Cessna, Boeing, companies like Garmin. These little companies kind of are start-ups. These are indicative of the industry, and the reason why they had such a bolstering community there was topography – they were kind of the centre of the U.S. at the time – and they have fantastic weather. With this, you can actually start building these innovations. You can actually start building up that robust industry.

The other item that we went to: we went to one specific company. There were so many on the field that we could have gone to, but we went to Synergy Aviation. These guys started up five years ago, Madam Speaker, only five years ago, in questionably some of the hardest economic times that we had. During the COVID events they actually increased their business. This is counterintuitive to these type of things, and the Premier wanted to see businesses that were up and coming, where things are happening. This is one that I could take him to.

They have fixed-wing and rotor-wing assets. They have AME, aircraft maintenance engineers. There's such a shortage, as we talked about, that they actually put their own program in place so they can apprentice these folks and keep them working on their own aircraft. They have a pilot training program not just for the general aviation community on rotor wing and fixed wing; it's for their own assets. There's such a high demand for pilots that are entering into the workforce. By the time they actually get in to fly the big guys, the big jets and everything else around the world, they need to grow their time.

3:30

A lot of this comes down to pipeline inspections. In that industry, again, because it's pipelines, you have to fly your right-of-way and do these surveys and look in on your right-of-way, make sure that everything is good. These guys are flying at least once a week in all these assets. They have assets up in Dawson Creek and all the way down to southern Alberta.

Now, again, coming back to that training, when you're looking at these pilots in the industry, if I was to jump out and have my commercial pilot's licence and I'm going to fly a rotary wing and if I want to take you on a little tour around the area, I'd probably have about 100, 150 hours, maybe 200 hours under my belt. The industry, the actual energy sector: when you're flying their rights-of-way, they want pilots with 1,500 hours. So there's this massive gap between trying to build up your flight time and actually being good enough to inspect pipelines versus handling people, and counterintuitively it is easier to fly people around than it is to inspect pipe. That's how seriously this is taken.

What they've come up with in-house is a monitoring system that can actually record the movements of the pilot, how they're doing, you know, in this, in their flight training, how they're responding to it, and show that there's consistency and repeatability in their actual flight training. From that, they've managed to get industry to take it from 1,500 hours down to 500 hours.

Another thing with the actual inspections: they've developed in-house, Madam Speaker – in-house – laser technology. They shoot a little laser beam down. With that, when it bounces back to them, they can tell the vibration difference on that light, and they're picking up methane, highly sensitive to picking up these things. Then you've got the drone industry that's taking place and all the imagery that we were talking about. These are the guys that are developing this in-house right at the Villeneuve Airport. That's just one of them. There are so many things that we can grow with this council. Now, the problem is that we haven't had a problem with innovation. We've had a problem herding the cats together. It's literally that you've got all of these independent people.

Here's something that I'll tell you, Madam Speaker. When you're a pilot, there's no question of who is in control. If you have two pilots in that aircraft and you have dual controls, one declares: I have control. When you turn over controls and the other person is doing it, they have control. Now, imagine an entire industry like that. They have control. They're working their own destinies, and they're blazing forward. But unless you can get those groups, those really strong-willed groups, working together, they're not going to be as successful as they can be. And when these groups are looking to go offshore to literally develop and grow flight time and flight training, we're missing opportunities.

You've got Asia – it has such a deficit in training – and you look at the Red Deer centre, how Red Deer has literally put up different control zones within their control zone and radio frequencies because there are so many pilots that are from offshore right now training in – yes, everyone – what could be Wichita North. We can grow these things if we look at a strategic manner to promote our industries. The only way we're going to do that is with a council like this, so to the member: fantastic.

PropWorks: there's another company. They actually do all the inspections and the rebuilds on your props out in the field. You've got Heli-Paint. They do all the painting services out in the field there. HeliQwest. These are companies that have their assets deployed all over North America. These are our own backyards where we have it taking place. Flying schools, the Namao Flying Club: they're right on the field at Villeneuve. You have Centennial Flight Centre. HeliQwest we talked about; they do some training synergy down at Parkland aviation, just around the corner.

Now, here's a neat thing that we were talking about, this rust remover. I'm not sure if folks are aware that you have to do recurrency training on your pilots. You actually have to do safety courses that are about five to six hours every couple of years. Most of us just do them anyway. With COVID, we haven't been able to do it normally, so now I'm part of a group that's coming together to see how we can actually train our pilots through the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association plus some other groups and to see how to do this. One of the ways that we're trying to foster that idea to get people excited about this aviation is to do a poker derby. Literally 50 general aviation aircraft are going to go on an undisclosed route at this point. We're going to drop into your towns, and I'm going to be sending out letters to the MLAs who are in those areas so that you can have your business owners and your businesspeople come out that are part of the aviation community and, moreover, the ones that aren't. You want to see people showing up in droves to come in and drop into your community. This is all the general aviation aircraft.

I've been talking lots about general aviation. I'm talking about the amateur builds as well. I'm lobbying for that type of segment to be on there. The reason for that is that for every general aviation aircraft, you have about .5 full-time equivalency that's specifically for it, but when you look at how many jobs are created from that, it's about 1.1. To put it in context, there's a report from COPA in 2017 talking about the aviation community. For every one general aviation aircraft that's out there, you're generating about \$287,000. That's what's being poured directly into that economy. These aren't the big airlines; these are the private people running these planes.

Again, I can't thank you enough for pulling this together. I know some other members want to talk, like, perhaps, the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul because they have a fantastic flying community down there as well. With that, thank you so much. I hope everybody votes in favour of this. Let's get things happening again. Let's fire up that economy, and aviation is going to help us get there.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 201. I will at the outset thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this bill. It's nice to see, actually, that a private member recognizes the importance of aviation to our province's economy in the absence of economic development and trade doing anything about it. I do think it's interesting that it did take a private member's bill to bring forward an idea to support the aviation industry. I will say that I agree with what the previous member said, that this industry is significant to the future of Alberta and has many, many applications.

My questions around this bill are such that: does it go far enough to support many of the companies and not-for-profits in the aerospace sector in the challenging times that they've had over the past six months, especially because of COVID? I mean, we look at the fact that Alberta's two largest airports have had to lay off 40 per cent of their workforce, so I wish that the government would do something about supporting these two airports, that bring in billions of dollars of economic activity. Billions. So far, Madam Speaker, there has been radio silence.

Now, I do appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has done a very thorough job in speaking with stakeholders across the province. I know that he's spoken to the two largest airports and dozens of airports, and I appreciate that, that he's gone out and done some hard work. My question is: has the member engaged with the minister of red tape? Creating another council, if we use the definition that this government has used over and over again, is red tape. I don't know if the minister of red tape is onside with this or if this is creating . . . [interjection] Well, minister of red tape or red tape reduction: it depends on the day.

The question is: is creating another committee going to address the realities that are happening today? Quite frankly, I mean, this is the kind of engagement that I did when I was the minister of economic development and trade, but I didn't need a committee to be struck to be talking to the various airports. Again, I have to beg the question: what is the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism doing in this area? I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek recognizes the opportunities that we have. I mean, let's face it, folks. The majority of tourists and tourism that comes into Alberta flows through our two major airports.

Now, again, this bill creates a committee and brings people together for dialogue. Great. That's important, but it doesn't address the fact that our two largest airports have had to lay off 40 per cent of their staff and have received nothing from this government. Now, keep in mind, Madam Speaker, that the airports are also not-for-profits. Every dollar that they earn above their costs gets reinvested into the programs that they offer. In fact, EIA over the past five years has attracted over a billion dollars' worth of investment on their property. They're an economic hub, and I know that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek knows that and knows the value of the airports.

This is why I will be supporting this bill. I appreciate the member bringing this forward. My frustration is that we have real opportunities, as other members have pointed out, in the tourism space, again, knowing that the majority of tourists come through our major airports. Obviously, many of them drive. What are we doing to ensure that we gain back and we don't lose significant volumes of GDP and jobs because we're not focused enough on supporting our tourism sector, on supporting our airports, that are critical supply chains, Madam Speaker?

Now, what is interesting is that, again, I know that Edmonton International Airport has focused heavily on supply chains in the past couple of years or maybe the past five years, maybe a little longer, and that they have actually been able to keep many of the cargo flights despite the fact that we know that airlines have had to lay off en masse, which is having a significant impact on the province.

3:40

You know, again, I appreciate the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, who is very excited about talking about innovation. Fantastic. We have that in common. I absolutely applaud all of the entrepreneurs throughout our province who are creating unbelievable technologies. I wanted to ask the member about the company he spoke about that started up when the global collapse of the price of oil occurred and there were challenging times and they were successful in starting up. Did they receive a tax credit? I actually think they did. And if they didn't get a tax credit, I'm pretty confident – we'll have to double-check – that they received some support from Alberta Innovates, which, of course, is an arm's-length entity so that people cannot go on and on about picking winners and losers. It's a third party that provides support, sometimes micro-vouchers, sometimes expertise, sometimes just navigating how to commercialize technology; sometimes it's prototyping. Those supports are critical because there are companies that are developing state-of-the-art technology. But I'll tell you this, Madam Speaker: so many of them will never see the light of day because they don't have the business supports or the business background on how to take that idea and commercialize it successfully.

This is where there is a role for the government to play in supporting our innovators and our job creators. Again, I think EIA is the first airport in Canada that has drones at the airport. There's a company there, that I've met with a number of times, that has a robo-bird that actually is used to chase away the birds to ensure that planes are safe. I think that's unbelievable: developed here in Alberta. We have a number of innovations. Something I've been very proud of: we were the first and for a long time the only province that had a space where you could test UAVs out of sight. There are now a couple in Canada; I believe there's one place in Quebec. Again, this is an opportunity for Alberta to really leverage our strengths. That's where it takes the government recognizing this and ensuring that they're creating the right conditions.

I was speaking with someone who was talking favourably about the original CEO of Suncor and talking about how they recognized that Alberta's oil and gas sector is as successful as it's been. Obviously, I recognize that the last few years have been challenging, but that success came because the government recognized that it needed support early on. Companies were going bankrupt drilling to try to find resources, so the government stepped in. There is a role for government to support the industry, and it can be, again, through entities like Alberta Innovates. That really does help our entrepreneurs and especially those that are developing state-of-the-art technology.

Again, members have talked about the uses in agriculture and smart agriculture and pipeline monitoring, technologies that are developed here in the province but may need support, whether it's through procurement, whether it's through acceptance, whether it's through micro-vouchers in prototyping. I think that there is an incredible opportunity for the province. You know, my hope is that the minister of economic development and trade and cabinet are actually looking at this. It took a private member to bail out the government and take the first step in doing something for the aviation sector. I honestly was hoping, hon. member, that maybe

the government would have adopted this bill to say: "You know what? This is a priority." The government has the ability to do that if they feel that a bill is going to have a strong enough impact.

Now, as I've said, I believe that there are great first steps. My hope is that these folks who are volunteering their time on this committee will not be in vain, that the recommendations they make the government will honestly entertain. I find it more frustrating than anything, Madam Chair. Ideas that are good ideas don't belong to a single political party, right? The tax credits that I go on and on about: they're not the NDP's idea; they came from business. Business doesn't care who came up with it or who's implementing it. All they say is: "Here's a good idea. Please listen to us, and run with it." You know, I hope that the government won't do what it has done and decide that certain ideas are bad – no; they're no good – that others are good. Sometimes I can't keep track. Somehow the investor tax credit is a boutique tax credit, but the film tax credit is not a boutique tax credit, yet it applies to a single sector. I'm confused on that one. I think, you know, we hear from companies looking for support.

The Deputy Speaker: I would now like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the members who have spoken today from Highwood, Drayton Valley-Devon, Edmonton-Decore, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for their kind comments and their support thus far.

I'm going to take you a little bit back here, just take a minute in time here to remind each one of you of when you took your first flight on an airplane. I don't think anybody will ever forget that, when they took their first flight, maybe to the United States, and when they took their first international trip. These are memories that we don't forget, and it shows the importance of this industry to all of us, our connectivity to our friends and family and neighbours across the country, friends to the south, and friends around the world. So think about that when you're supporting this bill as you're moving forward.

I wanted to talk a little bit about this bill as a portal of opportunity. I thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, but he might remember some of my criticism in the past of the fact that we lost Cathay Pacific Cargo and Air China Cargo from Alberta during a previous government's time in that economic development field there. When I called Cathay Pacific, some contacts there, they had not had a phone call from the Alberta government for four years before they pulled out of here. This was one of the reasons why we need a strategic aviation advisory council that can be strategic, that can work with government, as I have with the ministers of Transportation, economic development, agriculture, Energy, and so many more, so that we can make this an effective council.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you. When we're talking about government red tape, when you bring in the private sector, you know, the guys that are on the sticks and at the controls of those airplanes, they don't take red tape very kindly. They move through it. They cut it with their propellers every day, and they make that happen.

I talked a little bit earlier about some of the support. I just want to run through a few others that I want to give some acknowledgement to. Southern Alberta Institute of Technology President David Ross said:

SAIT shares the vision of Bill 201 [and the strategic advisory council,] and we are eager to assist in the development of a world-leading aviation and aerospace sector.

We heard from Sturgeon county, from Mayor Alanna Hnatiw: increased leadership and support [of] the aviation [and] aerospace and logistics industries is critical given the Government of Alberta's Blueprint for Jobs.

We heard from the town of Edson, Mayor Kevin Zahara: on behalf of [the] Town Council, we support [the] proposed Bill 201 regarding the Establishment . . . we feel this will provide an informed group with a strong voice, focused on industrial growth in the aviation and tourism sectors.

Wavv Technologies, Kim Van Vliet and Brad Robson: we also recognize the "world renowned delivery of all aspects of civil aviation" – the private member's Bill 201.

We also heard earlier from the president and CEO of the Calgary Airport Authority and the president of the Edmonton airport, Bob Sartor and Tom Ruth, strongly supporting this bill in helping to get them back on track.

Madam Speaker, this is a really important time for us in this province. When I came up with the idea for this bill, it was actually driven because we'd lost Cathay Pacific Cargo and Air China Cargo during the past government here, and I was upset that we lost that connectivity to the world which is so important to this province to move people, to move cargo, to move ideas and investment. Those are some of the keys. We need to fiercely compete in the future. Post COVID-19 this will be a highly competitive world, and we can take nothing for granted. We need that connectivity. We need to support the WestJets and even the Air Canadas and all the other airlines that serve this province, that come from Reykjavik and come from Amsterdam and come from Beijing, from around the world, to make sure that we have that connectivity so that we can be global leaders in a global and competitive environment.

Madam Speaker, these are just some of the examples I have on hand with respect to an enthusiastic and ambitious approach to the future of aviation and aerospace growth and diversification in our great province. I'm going to encourage everybody to support this bill, obviously, but I think it's more than that. I think it's about getting Alberta back on track to seize the aviation sector as a key part of the Alberta advantage. This is so important for this province. We need to get past COVID-19 in the weeks, months, and years ahead, and we need to ensure that Alberta does not lose ground but that we gain ground on an international scale.

Madam Speaker, I thank all of the members in the House, and I'm hoping that everyone will support this bill today and that we can move forward with picking the people that will make things happen in this great province, that we can make that council work and fire on all cylinders and take flight through the support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a third time]

3:50 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Voluntary Civilian Corps

505. Mr. Loewen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move Motion 505, that is on the Order Paper. Getting an opportunity to put forward a private member's motion is an honour as the draw process makes it possible to go years without being

drawn in a high enough priority to have the opportunity to make it on to the Legislature agenda for debate and vote. Well, today is my lucky day.

Last fall, when deciding what to make my motion on, one of the hot topics in my constituency was crime. In February I attended the AGM for the Alberta Provincial Rural Crime Watch Association in Grande Prairie. It was a well-attended AGM with members from all across Alberta. These were good people that were trying to make a difference in their communities and trying to reduce crime in their communities.

Now, I had also met a few times with a friend of mine, Brad Welsh, and the developer of an app, Darren Boyer, who developed an app called Lightcatch. Lightcatch is an app developed to help combat crime. I've also discussed rural crime with many constituents and heard of the damage it caused to both businesses and personal lives, not just financial loss but the mental anguish, the stress, and the fear that that crime causes. Through those discussions there were many things that became apparent. One was that crime in Alberta is a serious problem, and it is also multifaceted: from police response times to too few Crown prosecutors to a lack of court time to deal with criminals to what was considered a catch-and-release justice system that put criminals back on the street. Now our government under the Ministry of Justice has already started several initiatives to begin to solve many of these issues.

Another thing that became apparent in my discussions was the passion and the desire to help solve crime from the people within the community. In an attempt to capture that energy, I started to look into ideas of ways to involve the community in fighting crime. This is why I stand in the House today to move Motion 505.

I am proposing this motion because the people of Central Peace and the communities all across Alberta have a problem; they have a problem with crime. Criminals will brazenly enter a farm or an oil or other industrial site and take anything and everything they can get their hands on and be long gone before local RCMP are able to answer the call. It's a sobering thought to many of my constituents that they and their families are helpless as the nearest police detachment is 30 minutes, 45 minutes, sometimes an hour and a half away. The sheer size of the constituency and all other constituencies in this province in rural Alberta is daunting, which is why rural crime associations are such a boost to the effectiveness of police.

Rural crime associations are a perfect example of the Alberta spirit: neighbour helping neighbour, the community looking out for each other, and giving police information that helps with the swift capture of criminals. These rural crime watches are active throughout Alberta, but an overarching direction and support from the province and local law enforcement would increase their collective effectiveness across the board. Being trained and screened by local law enforcement would help ensure that co-operation between officers of the law and the civilian corps is smooth and effective. Communication and effective co-ordination are what is necessary. Criminals expecting isolated and easy pickings would instead be taken down by law enforcement that has the tools it needs to track them down.

This also fits with another aspect of policing, engagement with the community. If greater resources are put to initiatives where the community and law enforcement work together, the level of trust between law enforcement and the community rises significantly and the effectiveness of their efforts is increased.

Another area in which a civilian corps could be of help is for crowd safety. So often in fires, floods, and such disasters emergency responders need to focus all their efforts on the problem they're trained to deal with. With a trained volunteer corps, we

could free up emergency responders while keeping order and safety around the incident site.

In closing, I want to emphasize the possibilities of what a civilian corps could be and stress what it is not. It would not be a paid group, taking over for the police in any shape or form. It would not be an avenue for vigilante justice, for there lies other problems with that. We want volunteers to assist our province's law enforcement in getting the bad guys behind bars and the people of Alberta kept safe.

Again, this would be organized, screened, and trained by local law enforcement. It'll build on the associations already in place like the Rural Crime Watch and Citizens on Patrol associations that already partner with police. They'll work with crime-fighting apps that are becoming more and more common. They'll harness the people of Alberta's desire to help stop crime and will help organizational structure and facilitate communication between volunteer groups and the police. It can also possibly support search and rescue organizations, provide crowd safety, traffic control, and other assistance in emergencies, low-risk activities that help police and crime prevention and citizen safety, and patrolling communities and contact police if there are any issues.

With this in mind, I urge this House to support this motion, and I look forward to hearing the debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to respond to Motion 505 on behalf of my constituents and my caucus. I must admit that my understanding of what a civilian corps precisely is is limited, and I appreciate that the member had the opportunity to explain what he meant by bringing this forward. I think that the most important part of this motion is that it calls for law enforcement in the province to be changed. It is a timely call indeed.

Before I get too deep into law enforcement reform, I want to acknowledge a few things. Of course, we've heard it time and time again: rural crime is a serious issue. I have many problems with the motion today, however, which I will articulate later. But I want to make clear that I do not stand in opposition to wanting to address rural crime. In fact, while in government the NDP brought forward a rural crime strategy which saw the RCMP report 11 per cent fewer crimes in July 2018 compared to July 2017. The opposition of the time, which the Member for Central Peace-Notley was a part of, actually voted against that exact plan. I won't belabour this point, but I want to make clear that rural crime is an issue and as an Assembly we should continually address it.

I also want to acknowledge that communities and citizens are an important part of keeping communities safe, and there is even a role for community involvement in policing if it is done in the right way. Organizations like Rural Crime Watch do good work. The role of organizations like this to gather information is beneficial. There is also something very important to be said in ensuring that the police are representative of the province; however, the language of a citizen corps makes it sound more aggressively involved in law enforcement, and I have a few problems with that.

Firstly, it can put those citizens involved at risk. In August 2012 a peace officer named Rod Lazenby was tragically killed in the district of Foothills by being attacked on a rural property while he was on his way to investigate a dog complaint. Lazenby was 62 at the time of his death, and it led to peace officers calling for more protection. People doing policing need to have the resources and safety in place to be guaranteed that they can do that work safely. This includes everyone: those who volunteer or work in law enforcement, as police or peace officers. I am not sure exactly what

a civilian corps would look like, but I worry about the safety of those involved.

Secondly, now more than ever we need to emphasize the importance of police being properly trained to interact well and respectfully with the public. Retired Chief Justice Neil Wittmann released a report in 2018 on the Calgary police which articulates the need for consistent and evidence-based de-escalation training. With the conversations around the world taking place right now on police brutality, I believe emphasizing the need for police to be trained to de-escalate situations is of urgent, urgent importance.

I cannot say the same for the calls of this motion. I do not think it is of urgent importance for the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore a civilian corps. In fact, I think it an untimely and insensitive call for action from this Assembly when it is so clear that politicians need to listen more. We need to listen and explore the ideas from those calling for reform to law enforcement such as Black Lives Matter.

4:00

The Black Lives Matter movement is growing at a rapid rate after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Around 15,000 Albertans met outside this Chamber on June 5 and made their voices heard in their calls for change. The conversations and protests about police violence against black Americans have made us reflect on our own problems with systemic racism here in Canada, especially against indigenous peoples. On March 10 Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation was brutally attacked by police in Fort McMurray. A video of this incident was released and has brought the pressing need for change to the forefront. A video of Elliot McLeod being attacked by the Edmonton city police has also gained a lot of media attention lately. There is clearly a situation that must urgently be addressed.

RCMP deputy commissioner Curtis Zablocki recently had to reverse his comments when he said that systemic racism was not a part of policing in Canada. These comments troubled me, and after seeing the videos of Chief Allan Adam and Elliot McLeod being beaten, I do not know how he can say that systemic racism in Canada is not a given fact. I recognize that the commissioner has reversed his comments, but clearly there is work to be done. This education could be something that we urge the Minister of Justice to address.

In Government Motion 24, which was moved by the Premier, the UCP wants to review the Police Act and acknowledge the history of racism as a foundation of that work. Reviewing policing is important, and I think that listening during this process is absolutely essential, so I have trouble with Motion 505 calling for a very specific action. Through the global protest movements happening today, it is clear that a change is needed, and therefore action is definitely needed. As people in positions of power we have a role to listen to that movement. We in the NDP caucus want to strengthen the review of the Police Act by ensuring that indigenous voices and Black Lives Matter are heard during that process. I do not know how the Member for Central Peace-Notley feels about that in his desires to reform law enforcement. He will have a chance to a vote on an amendment calling for that, moved by my colleague from Edmonton-Meadows.

My problem with Motion 505 is that it is not concerned with consultation of racialized people at all. I actually think it is at direct odds with the Premier's motion to review the Police Act. Do the UCP actually want to review the Police Act, or have they already made their decisions and just want to pay lip service to that process? I know this motion just calls for the Minister of Justice to explore a civilian corps, but the motion also says "urge", and I do not think,

out of all the things involved in the current discussion on law enforcement reform, that this is urgent.

There are many things that I do think we could and should urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to do. The new parole board should have representation from black and indigenous communities. The Minister of Justice should be urged not to appoint judges who say that Black Lives Matter is a leftist lie to committees to recommend provincial judges. The Minister of Justice should also be urged to include voices from Black Lives Matter and indigenous leadership in the review of the Police Act.

There are also many important things we could urge all of cabinet to do to reduce crime. We should invest more into public education, public health care, and all antiracism initiatives. I would be happy to stand united as an Assembly and urge the Minister of Justice and all of cabinet to invest in all of these crime-reducing initiatives, especially in rural areas.

I have articulated my opposition to this motion, but I want to close by highlighting some things to think about that we could bring out from this motion. When I read about the civilian corps in the United States, I saw that there are many initiatives to mobilize citizens to help in disaster relief. That is an initiative worth supporting. I have problems, however, with the thought of those citizens being involved with active law enforcement, but there is something to be said about police reflecting communities and the justice system as a whole representing the diversity of our province. Although I do not think that will take place in creating a citizen corps, I do think it could happen in ensuring that our parole board had representation from black and indigenous communities. I also believe that including Black Lives Matter and indigenous leadership in the review of the Police Act could provide some thoughts on what community representation in policing would actually look like.

Madam Speaker, all in all I support reform to policing, but I do not support what this motion calls for. I support listening to racialized and marginalized voices. I believe that there are problems in policing, but I do not think that this motion provides the answer to those problems. Maybe in the debate on the government motion on the review of the Police Act we could work together on a path forward, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote against this Motion 505. In fact, I encourage debate on this motion to end quickly so that we can talk about reform to law enforcement based on what we have heard is necessary and not simply on what we want it to be.

Thank you.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to stand in this House and support my colleague from Central Peace-Notley on Motion 505. Rural crime is a major issue in my rural riding of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. A lot of the area is agricultural, and farmers have many enticing things on their land for thieves. Farm equipment, tools, and trucks are just some of the things that get stolen from farms. These are costly items, and it is unfair that farmers have to bear the material and psychological burdens of crime on their property.

The issue is that many farmers are sometimes 45 minutes from the nearest RCMP station. That's why rural crime watches work in these areas, and they are so important. What I love about rural crime associations is that they team up with the local RCMP detachments and are their eyes and ears. Volunteers go in pairs, drive around the community, and report any suspicious activity to the RCMP. I've heard from many RCMP officers who support this initiative because they simply cannot be everywhere. We have all heard that many communities have a shortage of officers, and this would be a

way to formalize the great work that rural crime watch associations are already doing.

The motion states, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta." I think the key word here is "assist" law enforcement.

Right now some community organizations don't have a full-fledged relationship with the RCMP. In my view the more community members we have who are invested in public safety, the better. What a civilian corps could do is make these relationships more organized. Volunteers would undergo background checks and be trained by local law enforcement, and, of course, they would answer to the local police. This is already being done in many jurisdictions and would build on Rural Crime Watch and Citizens on Patrol associations that partner with police already. Right now many people are joining rural crime watches in droves, and that's because so many have had enough of thieves breaking into their homes, their friends' homes, and their neighbours' homes.

Civilian volunteers are an untapped resource; people who know their local areas well, who know their communities, and who are able to assist law enforcement because of their knowledge. Some of the other things a volunteer civilian corps could do is to help in search and rescue operations. Volunteers already assist in these initiatives in local communities, but this could be an opportunity to expand this everywhere in the province.

Another activity a civilian corps could engage in is providing crowd safety and crowd control at local events such as our many rodeos throughout the riding or Canada Day events. Again, this would alleviate some of the strains on police resources and allow the community to be engaged in a meaningful way.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know that some may be skeptical about this motion, but what I want to affirm is that this motion is not proposing some kind of vigilante justice. Volunteers would not be armed. They would not respond to 911 calls. They would be unpaid and would solely exist to support local police. I think this motion is an excellent way for us to consider engaging local citizens who are already invested in the safety of their communities. We know that rural crime has been a persistent issue in our province, and this is one more step our government could take to address it. This is why I will be supporting this motion, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and give some brief comments regarding private member's Motion 505. I'd like to thank the Member for Central Peace-Notley for bringing this to the floor. This is a common-sense motion that really can serve as a gap filler in rural Alberta. One thing we've seen with the rural crime crisis is that there are definitely gaps dealing with that crisis in rural Alberta.

When I see this motion, I immediately think, "rural crime," and I think, "co-operation." This is about co-operation with communities and our RCMP and our law enforcement. One thing that you can't overcome is distance and time. I know that in my circumstances – north, south, east, west – I'm over an hour from an RCMP detachment in every direction. Then you also find that you're on the edge of their jurisdiction, so if there is a 911 call, often there is confusion, different detachments being called out, so you get some very long response times. It's not the RCMP's fault. It's just that to

deal with the distance and in the dark of night finding people's rural addresses on the backroad in Alberta, it's very difficult.

I see this much as building on the foundation from our rural crime watch, our Citizens on Patrol. These initiatives are happening right now anyway. I think the member previous spoke about engagement and that people joining these groups has gone through the roof. I see that, too. I sit on the Hanna Rural Crime Watch Association and attend when I can. Great RCMP involvement. They're there. They want to engage. They want people involved because they need help. I basically see this as a support for them and also to tell our communities, "Hey, we are going to look after ourselves somewhat, too," much like the volunteer fire departments. You know, we can't rely on government for everything, especially in these times in Alberta. I think we need to engage our civilians to look after one another, take care of each other.

I'm very intrigued by this motion. I'm glad the member brought it to the floor. I've seen a lot of people absolutely brought to their knees in tears because they can't open their business for the 10th time. They've just had enough. They're folding up the doors, leaving the plywood on the windows. I have a mayor named Bill Rock from Amisk, Alberta. He phones me constantly because that area has been quite hard hit on highway 13 east of here. The community engagement that's already happening there, working with their RCMP officers to try to contain known bad actors in the community. A lot of time they know who these people are, and they're trying to just protect each other. At the end of the day it's about fear. The property that's stolen is one thing, but it's about the violation that's felt when you know you can't rely on phoning the cops.

I think it's a little distasteful for members from downtown Edmonton that can phone the police and probably expect a decent arrival time to sit in this House and turn it into a completely different issue. What I know is that when I phone the police, I'm waiting for an hour or maybe two, and so is my wife when I'm up here talking about this. I fear for my wife and my kids and everyone else's in rural Alberta. I hope this is just a way to help be there for our neighbours, deter the criminals – we need some deterrents – and support our police officers and make rural Alberta just a little bit safer.

I would encourage everyone in this Chamber, rural or urban, to support this motion. I think it's a very flexible motion for the Minister of Justice. I think that only good could come from it. From a community perspective I'm proud to support it.

I'll let someone else use some time.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, anyone wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to rise and speak to Motion 505 being brought forward by the Member for Central Peace-Notley. I want to thank him for bringing this to our attention. The motion reads: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta." I will confine my remarks to this motion, and I will be speaking in favour of this motion.

I believe that as a rural MLA, as somebody that has constituents that deal with rural crime on a daily basis, this motion speaks to the need that they face every day when it comes to rural crime. Albertans are incredibly – they understand community. They understand that if we want to have a high quality of life, we can't do that outside of community and outside of working together. Madam Speaker, it always gives me a great deal of pleasure when

I see Albertans coming together and looking to solve the problems that they face in a common-sense way. We've seen it with COVID-19, with people volunteering to make masks for their neighbours. We've seen businesses come together to provide hand sanitizer for their neighbours and for their communities that they live in. Albertans look out for one another, and I believe that Motion 505 and the creation of a voluntary civilian corps speaks to the heart of who we are as Albertans and our willingness to foster a sense of safety within the community and a sense of community spirit within the areas within which we live.

Rural Albertans, especially in my constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon, have had ongoing issues with rural crime for many years, in at least the last four or five years as our economy has struggled. Last year I met with many, many rural oil and gas businesses. They came to my office. They approached me with their concerns about the vandalism that they see occurring on the work sites scattered throughout my constituency. My riding is quite large. I was back from one end to the other this weekend, and it takes me at least two to two and a half hours to drive east to west in my constituency. Throughout all of that constituency are oil and gas facilities, and they've seen a huge surge in rural crime incidents on the work site. I've had companies come into my office and show me the pictures of damaged well sites, of well sites that their workers are even scared of going onto because they're not sure what has been done and what could happen to them by stepping onto that well site. Tens of thousands of dollars worth of business.

I can remember one company coming in and saying: "You know, we had tens of thousands of dollars worth of damage, and then on top of that we had to send our workers who discovered the damage into the court system. They had to go in one day. It was cancelled. They had to go in a second day. It was cancelled. They had to go in a third day." So now they'd had to take three days off work, the company paying for their workers to go in and witness and testify, only to have the person get off with several hundred dollars worth of fines. It was very discouraging for them.

When they look at their workers' safety, when they look at the physical damage that's being done to their property, to the vandalism and theft that's occurring, they understand the need for us to do something in the way of trying to bring some safety and security, from a business perspective, into the constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon.

4:20

I can tell you that that there's been an increase in crime that has also affected the rural property owners in my constituency. I've spoken with my friends and my neighbours, and I know that they are watching out for each other's properties. I know that they are watching for suspicious drivers at times, and I know that when they should be sleeping, they're often out driving around, just trying to make sure that their property and that their neighbours' properties are being protected.

I can tell you of one neighbour, one constituent that came in and showed me the video from her camera of watching a pickup truck drive into their yard, turn around, back up towards their garage, and ram the garage door down so that they could grab two gas cans of gas.

I can tell you about another friend and neighbour of mine who has a business, who has to go from his business to his house to his parents' farm every night just to make sure that they're safe. One evening he parked and saw a pickup truck in his parents' farmyard, and when he stopped at the entrance, the truck turned around and drove out. Two nights later on his same route he sees the same truck in his parents' farmyard. This time he blocks the front of the farmyard, the access way. The truck takes off, rams his truck, and

gets onto the highway. He's still capable of driving, so he turns his truck around. He takes off after them, and for seven miles they played bumper tag on the highway, dangerous to everybody on the highway.

When he finally forces that truck into the ditch, by this time the police are just behind. This guy takes off, goes into the bush. The police take off after him. They actually got him. When they got into the truck, the fellow had the equivalent of an AK-47 in his truck. Two days later they went into the courts. The fellow was in jail less than 48 hours and was out on bail.

That's what it's like to live in a rural area, in Drayton Valley and area. I believe that I could probably go to every rural area in Alberta, every constituency that's rural in Alberta, and we could hear similar stories. So this motion, I think, is timely. This motion speaks to a need.

Now, it's not going to replace any role of law enforcement. Please, that's not what this is about. We're not asking for civilians to become police officers. But it would build on the crime watch and the Citizens on Patrol partnership that's already there with our police services.

Citizens are wanting to take part. They would undergo screening, they would undergo training by local law enforcement, and they would also be accountable to the local law enforcement. This is something that rural citizens are familiar with. This is something that rural citizens are willing to be a part of and to take part in because they understand community and they understand the need to work together with our law enforcement in order to be able to promote the safety and the security of everyone.

These people could support law enforcement by reporting when they see criminal activity. This doesn't mean that they would be assisting in investigations or that they would be armed. This proposal is simply a tool to support law enforcement and to empower citizens who want to look out for their fellow citizens. This motion aims to improve and to expand on the existing relationships between the various crime watch associations and the police and to facilitate communication between volunteer groups and the police.

It opens up discussion on the opportunities that exist for citizens to support search and rescue activities. It'll provide help to provide crowd safety measures. They could potentially provide traffic control and other assistance during natural disasters. They could help to patrol communities and to contact police if there are any issues. They could help with other low-risk crime prevention and citizen safety activities.

There's nothing here that I see that should be of concern. Rather, it's something to be able to support as we move forward in trying to establish safer communities across this province. I would speak in favour of this motion. I speak in favour of establishing a voluntary civilian corps that will open a pathway for that kind of a vision. We're not looking for citizens to become vigilantes. That's not on the radar here. We are looking to give Albertans the means by which they can feel that they are actively contributing to the safekeeping of their homes, their neighbours, their businesses, and their communities.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to stand in this House and speak today in favour of Motion 505. First of all, I just want to thank my colleague from Central Peace-Notley for his hard work on this motion and, quite frankly, for the province as well in bringing this forward.

Now, I'm from a large rural area in central Alberta, where for years one of the largest issues has been rural crime, and it still is a very serious issue. I could share countless stories that I've heard from attending rural crime town halls and listening to citizens coming to my office literally in tears. Rural Albertans are beat up and fed up with rural crime, and they sometimes plead, "Is there any way that I can help? What can we do?" I think this motion gives Albertans another option of how they could assist local law enforcement in their efforts to protect and serve the communities. It's a motion that, as it stands, clearly states: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta."

Now, Canada actually has a long history of civilian corps, and Alberta more recently has a fairly substantial history of wonderful local crime watch groups, associations assisting and aiding law enforcement in ways that are appropriate. From rural crime watch associations to search and rescue squads to citizens on patrol, the province has an abundance of willing and able Albertans asking to help in any way that they can. I should be clear. This motion does not reduce the power of local enforcement or seek to replace them. The motion simply allows citizens to create a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement. It won't answer 911 calls or things like that. I want to be clear. This would be a volunteer group that will help contain policing costs in Alberta as well by assisting them through a group of citizens. It's a group of volunteer citizens that would be organized, that would be screened, that would be trained, that would be under the command of enforcement professionals, and they would support the local police in their area.

I find it a bit disingenuous that the NDP want to claim that we would be putting citizens at risk by doing this. My goodness, my citizens are already beat up, rammed in their vehicles, run off the road, shot at by criminals, and have all of their stuff stolen or destroyed. It isn't this motion that's putting them at risk; it's the criminals that are putting them at risk. In fact, training and organization and knowing how to respond would in fact reduce the risk for people who are already seriously at risk. To say that this would put people at risk completely misunderstands the situation or is just utterly disingenuous.

Some of my colleagues have also mentioned that a group like this could also support search and rescue organizations, engage in any kind of emergency situations where they would be able to be a help, and the fact that they're trained and organized and under the command of professionals would be a great benefit to communities in many ways and a great support to policing issues. In the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka, where local law enforcement is sometimes thinned out because of the distances between rural properties, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that there are a lot of Albertans and constituents in my riding who would love the opportunity to assist with law enforcement and keep our communities safe.

Again, I find it very disturbing that the NDP do not support listening to marginalized rural Albertans in remote areas who are calling for this and want their voices heard. You have no idea how marginalizing distance and remoteness actually is, and the NDP simply do not want to listen to them, do not care about the marginalized reality of rural Albertans, didn't listen to them during their four years in power, and don't want to vote for this motion now. It just belies the truth of where they are at. The truth is they don't really care about marginalized people. They just want to use them for their agenda where and how they can.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill. I support all those who will support it. This is an opportunity for rural Albertans to be safe, so we need to pass this motion.

Thank you.

4:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise here today and speak in favour of Motion 505: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta."

Now, before I get into talking about Motion 505, I want to specifically thank the Member for Central Peace-Notley for putting this motion to the floor. Personally, from the amount of time that I've spent in the rural community and talked to my constituents and, as well, had the opportunity to be able to speak to the Member for Central Peace-Notley, I know we've had conversations a lot about the issues that exist in rural and remote areas.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Specifically talking about rural crime and other issues, I think this motion itself shows the amount of effort he's put into listening to his constituents and being empathetic to what's going on and trying to be able to find ways to come up with solutions, to be able to fill gaps.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of words that describe Albertans, I always come up with "hard working," "friendly" and "charitable." Albertans are simply remarkable. We are always willing to lend a helping hand to help our neighbours in our community. The Alberta spirit of kindness and sacrifice runs, I believe, deeply in all of us. When times are tough, we always come together to help each other.

I think this was evident through COVID-19 and definitely through the Foothills floods and the Calgary floods, where we saw thousands of Albertans come together to help each other, from communities offering places for evacuees to stay to organizations gathering food, other necessities, individuals just helping out in any manner that they can. I tell the story about being in High River when the floods hit and the owner of the dealership there throwing keys to the combines – their engines are much higher to drive through the water – you know, throwing keys to hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment so that civilians could use these to go rescue people, because it was chaos at this time.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, that is the true spirit of being an Albertan, and I believe this motion speaks to that. Albertans are always wanting to be able to help and give that helping hand, and this could include helping local law enforcement in search and rescue efforts, traffic and crowd control, patrolling communities, and other low-risk activities.

My constituency of Highwood, like many other rural communities, of course, as previously mentioned by other members in this House, has apparent problems with rural crime. I could stand here all day, I think, like many other members, and share story after story. Of course, the story of Eddie and Jessica Maurice always comes to mind. That happened in my constituency, but they're just one example of thousands of examples that happen throughout our province over and over again, and their story really shed light on what's going on in the rural communities. I think, you know, motions like Motion 505 are going to be able to help assist and find ways to be able to make our rural communities safer.

I mean, rural Albertans have expressed their concerns, and they've expressed to me over and over again: if they can help in any way possible. This motion by my colleague would allow rural

Albertans to assist local law enforcement in keeping their communities safe.

I want to be clear, as many of the other members have already, that this is not meant to be some sort of vigilante group, nor would it ever take over the job of our local enforcement. Rather, it would just strengthen and support their response. A civilian corps would be trained and organized and, you know, be under the local law enforcement. This would help build on what we already have established in our rural areas with our Rural Crime Watch, our Citizens on Patrol, and even search and rescue associations.

Madam Speaker, this motion speaks to the desire of Albertans wanting to be able to help out their communities and make them safer in any way they can. I'm really honoured and happy to be able to stand up in support of this motion, and I urge every other member of this Assembly to support it as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in support of this motion. My constituency of Camrose is plagued by rural crime. The motion reads: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to explore options to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta."

I think this is a great idea because what it would do is that it would formalize the already great work that the rural crime watches do with the RCMP across the province. This civilian corps, if established, would be organized, screened, and trained by local law enforcement and would answer to the local police. This group would not be paid. I want to reiterate that this group would not take over for the police, that the volunteers would not be responding to 911 calls, and critically they will not be armed.

I welcome this motion because my constituency of Camrose has seen an uptick in rural crime rates, just like much of the province has seen over the past few years. We've seen a general increase in businesses broken into, oil and gas lease sites broken into, and farms broken into around the Camrose constituency. This is a huge problem as Albertans and businesses are already struggling with low oil prices and high unemployment rates. They simply cannot afford to replace high-cost items like quads, tractors, or copper wire on oil wells.

One of the issues in rural areas is that a lot of farms and oil well lease sites are far away from the nearest RCMP detachment. Response times can vary between 45 minutes and an hour. The key is working together to tackle the problem. Right now many people are tired of seeing their friends and neighbours get robbed, and I want to help. What this motion, put forward by my colleague from Central Peace-Notley, does is that it could channel the support in communities to help tackle rural crime locally. This motion also raises awareness of the issues and starts a conversation about this possibility. I've heard from so many constituents who are simply tired of the problem and want to be a part of the solution.

Alberta used to have some auxiliary officers across the province several years ago, and it was a great program that could possibly operate like a civilian corps. What they did was ride along with the officers in the rural areas. Because of a lack of RCMP officers, auxiliary officers used to provide crowd control, and they would work in schools before we had resource officers. They also established a connection with the youth in our communities. Actually, a lot of the people who would join the auxiliary program would be university students who were looking to become RCMP officers. What they would do was join for six months before going

to Regina for depot and get the training to help them succeed in the program.

Madam Speaker, this could be another opportunity, civilian corps. We could also use civilian corps to build on our already strong support for community events or emergencies. They could provide crowd safety or do traffic control and provide other assistance in emergencies like accidents, fires, or floods. Many events around my constituency, including Big Valley Jamboree and the many rodeos around Killam and Viking, could use more crowd control. This could be another opportunity to utilize these great resources and free up RCMP resources for emergencies that arise. Again, they would work with the local RCMP enforcement, and their role would be limited to what's appropriate.

Madam Speaker, I'm so pleased to stand in support of Motion 505 today, and I appreciated the opportunity to speak on it.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Madam Speaker, thank you so much and to the Member for Central Peace-Notley for bringing this forward. Again, it's one of those where, you know, necessity is the mother of all invention when we're talking about the rural crime issues that are taking place. We have Rural Crime Watch, we have Citizens on Patrol, and I think this is a wonderful way of augmenting that and, actually, you know, herding the cats together, if you would. There are lots of well-intentioned people out there that just need that little bit of help.

When I was sitting in some of the Rural Crime Watch meetings, what they felt they'd kind of lost in the last several years was that support for those types of organizations and communities. You look at what took place with COVID. I mean, the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon mentioned that as well, with people coming together.

The interesting thing is that I heard the member opposite from Edmonton-Ellerslie talking about some of the potential racism issues out in the law enforcement community. Now, to me, this would be a chance to be completely reflective of the community. It's a community-driven type item. If it's the corps, it's volunteers from the community. If anything would help take away from any problems with it, this would be it, because this is a boots-on-the-ground citizens' group that has a vetting process that goes through that.

4:40

In my area I border on Edmonton. Also, some may know that recently I keep getting calls from the Chinatown community. To put it in context there, I found it very interesting that at the centre of Edmonton you've got a community that feels underrepresented in the way of security. You know, they had talked about the drug issues down there, the treatment centres, et cetera. In their particular area they've got their own unique rural crime thing happening, where they don't feel safe, where they were reaching out to law enforcement to get more coverage, where they weren't getting the coverage that they needed.

You know, the folks that own the Italian Centre: they're 80 years old, they've worked hard their whole life, and they did have their building burn down. Thank goodness they got out in time. All I could think of, the same as the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, is that feeling when you're away from home and can't get there to help out, and you don't know where someone is to be safe, to take care of your own family. This isn't just happening in rural Alberta; this is happening everywhere.

So if the solution for this would be to have an urban corps – it doesn't delineate whether it's an urban or a rural corps. It's the

sense of that community coming together, getting the proper training, being empowered to be able to help out their partners, the people around their community, their neighbours. This is such a wonderful motion to bring forward. I'm glad that we can have this debate on it. Again, I'm looking at the rural context but also with that urban lens.

For Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland – we literally sit on the border of west-end Edmonton – the number of people that we have, the propensity and the density that we have towards the eastern side, is disproportionate to the western side, and when you start travelling that hour and a half, two hours to the west, you see that change. But we're so close to the city that, again, I come back to one of my constituents who's an Edmonton city police officer, who lives in my area, who gets to deal with the stuff that's happening down here: we don't have a crime issue; we have a drug issue. At the core is the drug issue that's feeding all of these other things. The reason why the criminals go out of the city to the outside borders and the outskirts, where we're at, is because they can get around. It's like one dog chasing 20 rabbits and you've got them scattered out in a quarter section. Good luck. But if we had citizens that could step forward and help their communities, help each other, I think we'd solve a lot of these problems.

So thank you so much. I'll be voting in favour of it. A great initiative.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 505?

Seeing none, I would like to ask the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley to close debate.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I want to thank everyone for their comments on Motion 505 today. I guess I was maybe a little disappointed but maybe not surprised that the NDP won't be supporting this motion. They've shown that they've never supported rural Alberta in the past, and they have no desire to make communities safer, I guess. I think they should realize that this isn't just about rural Alberta. This is about Alberta as a whole. This is about helping our police officers to make Alberta a safer place to live for the people here.

Since our government was elected, we've done multiple things to help curtail crime. We've hired new police officers. We've expanded the roles of current officers. We've strengthened property rights. We've allowed community impact statements in court. We brought about a bill to curtail scrap metal theft. So we've done a lot of things already. It was interesting to listen to the NDP Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie talking about police training and police reforming and police reviewing and everything. This motion has nothing to do with that, Madam Speaker. This motion has everything to do with curtailing crime and has to do with exactly what it says: "to establish a voluntary civilian corps to assist law enforcement in Alberta." That's exactly what this motion is about.

I just want to tell a quick story to wrap up this discussion. Last year I had an envelope show up in my constituency office. As I opened it up, I found a spreadsheet with names listed, crimes committed, known accomplices, locations and addresses of those listed and their accomplices. Upon further review I was able to understand what I was holding. Someone or a group of people had gone through the court dockets, possibly for years, and compiled a list of recently convicted criminals in their community and surrounding communities. They had researched which criminals were connected and how. They had their known hangouts and other valuable information for law enforcement. A couple of things struck me with that document. One was how many criminals there

were in the area and how many were repeat offenders, how many were not just thieves but also convicted of domestic abuse and other crimes. The other thing I noticed was the time it must have taken to compile this list and all the info in it. All the info was public info or local knowledge, but to gather it would have taken a lot of time, and I think that showed that the people are interested in helping out. They want to help out. They want to solve this issue of crime in their communities.

I just want to mention one last thing. The document that I held in my hands showed that the people within the community felt that the police needed help with some research and that local knowledge would not have been readily available to them had they not created that document. That helped me realize that this voluntary citizen corps, the Alberta rangers or whatever name is chosen, not only will help but also is needed and will be appreciated by the community and by the police.

I encourage all to vote in support of this motion to help curtail crime in our neighbourhoods, to make our families safer, and to make our communities safer. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Sawhney
Amery	Lovely	Schow
Dreeshen	Luan	Schulz
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Orr	Stephan
Gotfried	Rehn	Turton
Guthrie	Rosin	van Dijken
Hanson	Rowswell	Walker
Horner	Rutherford	Wilson
Hunter		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Ceci	Loyola
Carson	Goehring	Renaud
Totals:	For – 28	Against – 6

[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 23 Commercial Tenancies Protection Act

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 23, the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act.

Bill 23 would enable protections for commercial tenants in Alberta to provide businesses with more certainty as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bill 23 provides the legislative framework to protect eligible commercial tenants from having their leases terminated due to nonpayment of rent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and prevents landlords from raising rent and charging late fees and penalties on missed rent. If passed,

the legislation would cover the period from March 17, when the public health emergency came into effect, until August 31, 2020.

The legislation and upcoming regulation would protect three core groups: commercial tenants with tenancy agreements that would be eligible for the federal Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program but whose landlords have chosen not to participate, commercial tenants who have had to close their business due to public health orders, and commercial tenants who have had their business revenue decline by 25 per cent or more as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The act will also apply to nonprofits leasing or renting commercial properties.

Under the legislation any late fees, penalties, or rent increases imposed on a commercial tenant by their landlord between March 17, 2020, and August 31, 2020, would need to be reimbursed. While this legislation would prevent future evictions, the legislation would not undo any evictions or lease terminations that happened before the legislation was tabled.

Bill 23 also includes provisions to ensure landlords don't miss out on deferred rent by requiring that tenants and landlords work together to develop a rent payment plan for missed payments. This legislation also ensures landlords retain the right to evict tenants should a tenant break terms of their lease that are not covered by the act such as damage to property.

Lastly, the legislation authorizes regulation-making authority to the minister. An accompanying regulation would need to be developed to set out parameters around the revenue decline that a business must experience in order to be covered under the legislation. Regulation-making authority would also allow the government to extend the end date of the legislation in the future if needed.

Madam Speaker, over the past few months our province has been grappling with the greatest threat to public health in a century, the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in the shutdown of much of the economy, both domestically and internationally. This, coupled with a global collapse in oil prices, has had a devastating impact on our economy and Alberta businesses. All of this follows five years of economic fragility for our province. Those five years were marked by an exodus of investment from our province, exacerbated by the policies of the previous government. Overall, my department has identified that foreign direct investment fell by more than a third under the previous government.

While our first priority is protecting the health of Albertans, we cannot ignore that our economic downturn is also having a real impact on Alberta businesses. We were elected under a mandate of jobs, the economy, and pipelines. That mandate still holds true today. In fact, I would say that it is even more critical in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and what we know will be a challenging recovery.

Businesses have been hit hard across all sectors of the economy. They are experiencing lower revenues and liquidity constraints, they are taking on more debt, and they are struggling to pay rent. The market for global investment will be extremely competitive following the pandemic. Jurisdictions all over the world will be fighting for the same investment opportunities, which will likely be curtailed for some time. We need to ensure that our businesses remain open and viable through this time.

That's part of why Alberta has also joined other provinces, the territories, and the federal government in the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, also known as CECRA, to help small businesses pay rent, provide certainty, and relieve some of the financial stress businesses are facing. With the other business supports, including the tax and payment deferral, that we have announced over the past few months, Alberta has one of the most

generous support models for small businesses in Canada, but we know that more supports are needed.

Over the past few weeks my colleagues and I have taken the time to engage with thousands of businesses across the province to hear more about the challenges they are facing. Through our recently launched online feedback survey for commercial renters and landlords, we've been hearing a consistent message: the federal Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program is not enough. Madam Speaker, Bill 23 would help address shortfalls in the current CECRA program. It would give eligible business owners some peace of mind as they reopen and help the provincial economic recovery. This federal program does provide a 75 per cent reduction in rent for small businesses, which is why we joined in with other provinces and territories.

However, we have heard that the program is not meeting the needs of all Alberta-based small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs. I've heard that they find the program too complex, and some landlords have stated that they will not participate in the program. I have also heard that the CECRA requirement of a 70 per cent decrease in revenues over all three months of April, May, and June is too onerous for some businesses.

That is why we are taking action to fill these gaps through our legislation. I know that the Premier and my colleague the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance are continuing to lobby their federal counterpart for changes to the CECRA program. Our legislation will help create the conditions for landlords and tenants to work together in a respectful and fair manner to develop a payment plan that benefits them both. We arrived at our number of a 25 per cent revenue reduction because we wanted to ensure that businesses that were forced to curtail due to public health orders and through no fault of their own were captured. While the federal program requires a 70 per cent reduction in order to qualify, we are ensuring that those who saw lesser declines in revenue can still be protected from eviction.

5:10

Madam Speaker, commercial landlords and tenants are both dealing with unprecedented challenges. We continue to ask landlords to be flexible and understanding of their tenants' financial circumstances, and we continue to stress that those who can pay their rent should pay. This isn't an easy time for anyone, but by working together, we will get through these tough times. I'm confident the business community will rise up to support one another. These supports also come alongside the most generous supports of any province in Canada.

Some of the other measures we've introduced include Workers' Compensation Board premium payment deferral for all private-sector businesses; 50 per cent payment of WCB premiums for small and medium-sized businesses; freezing education property taxes at 2019 levels; a six-month education property tax deferral for businesses; corporate income tax payment deferral to August 31, 2020, interest-free; a two-month filing deadline extension for annual returns with Alberta corporate registry; abating the tourism levy from March to December, 2020; ATB Financial's customer relief program, which provides customers deferrals on loans, lines of credit, and mortgages for up to six months; and our \$5,000 grant to SMEs forced to close or whose operations were severely curtailed due to public health orders.

Madam Speaker, we are introducing this legislation to provide protections for commercial tenants at a time when Alberta businesses and Alberta's economy need it most. Ensuring that businesses of all types, sizes, and ownership are able to weather the emergency is essential to our economic recovery and to supporting jobs that Alberta's families depend on. To be clear, over 95 per cent

of Alberta's businesses are small businesses, and they are what we are working hard to protect. The successful relaunch and recovery of Alberta businesses is in the best interest of all Albertans. They are the backbone of our economy, and they create the jobs that Alberta's communities and families depend on.

If passed, these protections will provide businesses with much-needed support so that they are better positioned to reopen and rehire staff as we move through the phases of relaunch. We're listening to Alberta's business community, and we're responding to their needs by developing supports to boost Alberta's economy as we move to recovery. This legislation is one of our made-in-Alberta solutions that expands on available federal and provincial programs and ensures that our province's businesses can return to prosperity.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to speak.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 23, the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act. Now, I will make a number of comments. I do have some questions for the minister and hope that when we move to Committee of the Whole, she's able to respond to some of these questions.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, I will state, first of all, that my first question is: what took so long? This is something that we'd been calling for a while ago. In fact, a month ago businesses could have used this tool to ensure that they didn't have to close their doors. Now, I think that, overall, on my first reading of this bill, it is a step in the right direction. I do think, though, that this is really a bare minimum of support.

I'll go through some of the concerns I have. You know, the first one is that this is a rent deferral. Again, what it means is that businesses will have to ensure that they make up for their months of rent to be able to pay it when this expires on August 31. Now, I appreciate the idea that landlords and tenants may be able to work out a payment plan – that is great, and some of them may – but there are examples under the residential protections where landlords refused or couldn't work out a payment plan, and renters did get evicted. I think, at the outset, that some support for the businesses themselves – I mean, I know from talking with businesses that some are not interested in deferrals because it's mounting debt that is piling up, waiting for them. They would rather not work with that. They would rather find a completely different solution, and that's where I would have hoped, Mr. Speaker, that there would be something in here to actually help support some of the businesses with one of their biggest challenges, which is, of course, to continue to pay commercial rent.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that we've also heard that the federal plan, this CECRA program, is broken for a number of reasons. I appreciate the minister recognizing that their 75 per cent threshold is far too high. There are far too many businesses that will close because they don't meet the criteria. I mean, that's one of my questions. The 25 per cent criteria in this bill: I'd love to know from the minister how they landed on that number. You know, again, a cross-jurisdictional scan: is that the number that other provinces are using, 25 per cent? I appreciate that it's not a precise science to know exactly what to land on, but the hope is that that is the correct number because having to come back through this place after learning that a number of businesses won't be able to qualify – we know that businesses that were just starting to scale up or just

starting to bring in revenues often don't qualify for these types of programs, so it does disproportionately affect our newer businesses.

Now, again, I'm glad to hear the minister recognize that there are loopholes in the CECRA program, the federal program, and that there are landlords that are choosing not to apply for this or new businesses, like I just mentioned, that don't have the revenue history to be able to qualify. That's something that I would have liked to have seen in this bill. How do we fill in some of those gaps, Mr. Speaker? Obviously, we need our businesses to get back on their feet, but they need some relief immediately. Again, this was my opening comment: I wish this bill would have been tabled a month ago in this House because businesses were calling for it. They were calling for support from the government. So I think it's a fair question to say: what took so long when it comes to supports for our commercial businesses?

I'm curious to know if the minister and the government have the statistics, I mean, without having to wait for Stats Canada, about: where are we at as far as businesses; how many of them, unfortunately, have had to close their doors? How many has the province lost? How many of those can be attributed to the fact that they have bills that have put them under water? I mean, obviously, without having revenues or with limited revenue streams, it makes it extremely difficult to pay their bills. Does the government, does the Department of EDTT have that information?

We've also heard that both landlords and tenants, as I mentioned, are unhappy with CECRA and the fact that there is funding that's only going to the landlords. Now, obviously, they have to pay their bills, but what about additional supports for the tenants, for those businesses? Now, the business owners that we've spoken with have asked the question, "Why is it that the funding goes right to the landlord and not straight to the tenant?" which is a good question.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this bill proposes a temporary ban on commercial eviction, and members can go through the bill to look at and take note of the fact that it does prohibit landlords from increasing rents, from trying to play games around the dates, which is appreciated. So between March 17 and August 31 there can't be late fees or penalties for tenants that have been unable to pay their rent or their rent in whole. Again, you know, this encourages a conversation between the tenant and the owner to enter this payment plan, but there are questions around that. Again, I think that, for me, one of the challenges in this bill is no concrete relief package for the tenants directly.

5:20

Now, some of the questions that I have for the minister on this bill are a little bit around process. It does need to be noted that the bulk of the rules in this bill, or parameters, are going to be decided through regulation. Of course, I think every opposition party in the history of this province has raised concerns about the fact that, really, when the meat and potatoes of a bill are done in regulation, that's done behind closed doors by cabinet without input from opposition or private members even on the government side as well as the public. The public is not part of those discussions.

What I would like to know, one of the questions that I have, is: how is the government ensuring, should this bill pass, that renters, tenants, are aware of this program, that this program exists? It does land on the shoulders of the government to ensure that businesses are aware that this support exists. To use inside speak, the question is: what is the comms plan, or the communications plan, to tell tenants that this type of temporary relief exists and to encourage them to use it? How do we ensure that the landlords are aware that this is going through so that they aren't trying to collect late payments or that they aren't trying to evict tenants? I mean, we don't want to create red tape, or at least we hope we don't want to

create red tape, but this is something that I hope the government has considered, that we don't want to jam up some of the other bodies that help deal or facilitate conversation. How is this being communicated to businesses around the province?

Under Payment Plans, section 6(1) – and I'll just read this into the record so that you're aware of what I'm referencing: "If a tenant is unable to meet the tenant's rent obligations under a tenancy agreement and this is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the landlord and tenant shall enter into a payment plan for the payment of rent." Okay? My question is: what proof is required? If the tenant is unable to fulfill their rent obligations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, what is their obligation as far as proving that that was the cause of their inability to make this payment?

Then the next question is: who makes that decision? Again, is there a board? Is it the minister? Is it cabinet? Who's administrating this, and then who makes the decision? Is there an appeal process? What if whoever makes the decision decides: "No. You know what? Your revenues were declining. Yes, you met the threshold, but for whatever reason you don't qualify for this." How does that renter apply for an appeal? Is there an appeal process?

Another question. Further down, still under Payment Plans, Mr. Speaker, section 6(3).

A payment plan has the effect of amending the tenancy agreement to the extent necessary to give effect to the payment plan, and in the event of a failure by a tenant to adhere to a payment plan after the emergency end date,

August 31,

a landlord shall have all remedies available to the landlord under the tenancy agreement as modified by the payment plan.

Again, just looking for some clarification on "all remedies available." That language is a little bit vague, so I would love some clarification on that.

If we jump to Regulations, section 10(1) talks about the minister making regulations. Now, again, this list is fairly long. This is what I had already flagged as a concern with the bulk of the details being through regulation, not coming through here now in this legislation. The minister will have the authority to make regulations for "prescribing a class of landlords to which this Act applies." I'm sure everyone is very interested in what the different classifications are and who this will apply to. Now, I think it's fair to get that answer before we decide whether to pass this legislation or not and not to hear: well, we're still figuring out which classes of landlords.

I think it's important for every member in this Assembly to be able to go back to their constituents and to their commercial tenants to say: we know, should you meet this threshold, that you fit into the class of tenants that this will apply to and that landlords know in advance that this extension or temporary pause or relief for several months will occur. That's section 10(1)(b) and (c), again, the class of landlords to which the act applies and the class of tenants to which the act applies. I think it's important for the minister to clarify that before we're asked to, you know, move this bill through should that be the will of the Assembly.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think some questions that we have, including, again, a little more clarification around that 25 per cent. Is that a sliding scale? Is that an average of several months, or is that 25 per cent in a specific month, or is it a period of months? We heard that for supports for small businesses – I believe it's a federal program – initially it was a high number, and it was three consecutive months. Businesses said to us: you know, we were just in the process of ramping up; we actually didn't hit those targets to qualify. So we would like to see a bit of an average over a few months that would open up that eligibility. I mean, the last thing we want to do here is try to introduce a tool and then put

up a whole bunch of restrictions or red tape around it which will be prohibitive for businesses.

Now, I appreciate the Minister of EDTT saying already that they've heard that the CECRA program is administratively burdensome, so that's part of the reason many landlords weren't applying for it. You know, what assurances do we have? And more than just the minister standing up and saying, "I will endeavour or ensure that this program won't be cumbersome," can you provide the Assembly with a bit of a template? How do we know what that process for the application will look like to ensure that it's not burdensome? You know, most of me really wants to take the minister's word at face value, but I think Albertans will want to see something either written in black and white or know what that actual process is. So a little bit of clarity around that would be greatly appreciated if and when we move to Committee of the Whole.

Now, I just want to share a quick little stat. On May 13 of this year, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, released a survey stating that 55 per cent of businesses believe that rent relief could be the difference between staying open or not. Now, that was back on May 13. My concern with how long it's taken the government to come forward with this piece of legislation is: how many of those businesses that CFIB interviewed have managed to keep their doors open? How many of them, unfortunately, have had to close their doors or fold up shop because this bill, this temporary relief, is too little too late? I cringe at the thought of hearing what those numbers are. You know, well, we will be reaching out to CFIB, and hopefully they have some statistics around that.

5:30

You know, I wished that the criteria for CECRA – now, I know that Alberta has worked with the federal government on this, and I appreciate the minister talking about how they are having conversations with the feds, but I think that criteria for that program need to be rewritten. I think that Alberta does and is investing or committing some dollars to that program. Again, the minister has talked about consulting with thousands of landlords and tenants in the commercial space over the past few weeks. I would love to hear if they feel that this goes far enough or if they're asking for other forms of relief.

Again, I can tell you that after 2015, with the global collapse in the price of oil, we worked with the federal government to expand the BDC loans for businesses by a billion dollars. That did help a significant number of businesses, but I can tell you that there were a large number of them that said: giving me the ability to incur more debt is not a solution. Now, for some, it's bridging that gap. I understand that, and that's great when we can use the tools we have at our disposal to make that available. But, you know, again, I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all solution for every single business, depending on what they're facing. Saying to a business, "Here, you know what? We'll just stockpile this debt so that in three months' time it's now a mountain" – businesses may say: "Thanks but no thanks. We're looking for some direct relief that comes in the form of grants as opposed to loans." Is the government hearing that? What are they thinking of? What are their plans as far as supports for businesses that aren't looking for loans?

You know, listening to the minister talk about all the supports the government has given to small businesses, I think, frankly, the bulk of supports for businesses thus far have sadly come from the federal government, with very few from the provincial government. When we talk about supports for businesses, it's supports for, obviously, our traditional sectors, with which Alberta is very, very strong and has been blessed, but it's also supports in the areas of building on

our strengths in those emerging sectors or those that provide support to our core sectors. We need to get businesses investing.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join in the debate this afternoon? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 23, the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act. I appreciate the previous speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, for his points. I share many of the same concerns that he does in terms of the fact that this legislation – while I do intend at this point, overall, to appreciate and support in principle what is being put forward, I have concerns about the specifics within it and, to some extent, what isn't mentioned within it as well.

Of course, many businesses across the province and across Canada are struggling. It was the case before COVID-19. It has only exasperated the concerns for these local businesses. We need to do more to support them, and the minister rightfully acknowledged that, acknowledged the fact that the CECRA program, in many cases, is not supporting eligible businesses and tenants and landlords the way that it should be. Those are concerns that have come to me through my role as the critic for Service Alberta and also as the MLA for my community, businesses coming forward to share their concerns.

When we look at what is before us, an important point to recognize is that once again the NDP has been calling for some of these reasonable changes, and one of them, being a ban on evictions for commercial properties, took way too long. We've been calling on this for several weeks, if not a month or longer, and the fact that we're finally seeing something: while I appreciate that, the problem is that what we're seeing in here is really the bare minimum of what the UCP government should be doing on this matter, and it came way too late. When we talk about the specifics of what's in this legislation, the fact that they're not actually providing any real relief to struggling businesses and are just simply pushing the pain down the road, kicking the can down the road: for these tenants and landlords to have to come back to the negotiations in only a few short months is definitely a problem.

Something that I question is that while the CECRA program was announced a few months ago – I believe that April was when discussions were happening through media about the concerns that were within the CECRA program and the inability for many organizations and businesses to actually access that program – I just wonder why, one, we didn't come up with the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act back then, when that discussion was happening, to better align what we're seeing in this program to what has been offered by the federal and provincial government in the CECRA program. Why didn't we pass this or have the discussion about this at that time?

The fact is that now there are organizations out there who have either accepted or declined the support of the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, and now the provincial government is saying: well, if you did accept it, then you're not eligible for this; if you didn't, then potentially you are. There are concerns there as well that businesses should have the opportunity to look at all of the programs, hopefully at the same time, to decide what is actually going to be best for themselves as the landlord and for the tenants that are in those commercial businesses. That's a major concern for me. You know, all the details were not in front of these organizations when they had to make those decisions, and here we are now. Many of those organizations, tenants may have

already closed their businesses. Unfortunately, there's nothing in this legislation that is going to help those businesses.

Once again, as the previous member spoke about, there are also landlords who, for whatever reason, made the decision to not get funding through the CECRA program, and those tenants have been left behind as well.

I appreciate, as far as I can tell, the low threshold that's been put in this legislation: if you did not access the CECRA program, if your business has lost 25 per cent or more of its income, then you are eligible for this program. I can appreciate that.

I think that the 70 per cent threshold for the CECRA program has made many companies, many tenants and commercial landlords ineligible to access that funding. That's a concern for us. That has been something, since that program was introduced, that has come up through many reports and many industry associations raising the red flags, that not only was the threshold too high, but also it wasn't necessarily the right program to fit what they needed.

When we look at what's in this bill, it continues to rely on the good faith between tenants and landlords. I can appreciate that landlords are doing everything they can to support their tenants to ensure that they can get through this pandemic together, but there also needs to be, in many cases, as we see on the private residence or rent tenancies for regular citizens, that aren't corporations – I'm losing my train of thought here. There are dispute resolution services for those people. If a renter comes to a landlord and says, "We can't come to an agreement here," well, there is a process to have those disputes resolved without having to go to court. That is not something that we see in this legislation. Potentially the minister who brought this forward can talk about the fact that maybe that wouldn't have worked in this case.

I recognize that there isn't a process for commercial tenants and landlords to go through the dispute resolution process in this province at this time, but I question why – if that was a thought and if there were reasons to not do that or if it just didn't even cross the mind of the minister, I'd be interested to hear that as well because many of us watched the press conference that happened with the minister of economic development and trade. Unfortunately, like many of the media raised at that point, it wasn't very clear how this program was going to be laid out, and if landlords and tenants couldn't come to an agreement, there was no resolution support for them at that point. This government continues to tell them that they have to go to court. Well, that's not a resolution in itself. Well, it might be, but it's a very expensive one at a time when neither the tenant or the landlord has the money to cover those costs.

5:40

Once again, I am very concerned about landlords choosing not to apply, especially if they are eligible for this program. I would question why that might be happening. I have heard certain instances, potentially anecdotally, that some landlords do not necessarily want to keep specific businesses in their property. That is their decision to make, but I really hope that that hasn't been the case across the province. If it is, we need to find ways to rectify that and address those concerns where landlords have the opportunity to gain access to the CECRA program but aren't, for whatever reason. I would be interested to find out if the minister has any information about organizations that may have potentially been eligible that have not accessed it and why that might be the case.

I echo the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview about wanting to find out how many businesses have closed down as a result of the pandemic, whether it be because of the public health orders or just because their business had fallen so much that they could no longer pay for rent and other means like that.

Another important question with the timelines that have been presented in this: these organizations are going to have to come back to the negotiating table as of September. Just hoping to find out how the minister plans to rectify the fact that it's very possible that the pandemic will not have ceased by September. What happens when we come to the end date of this legislation? I imagine there will continue to be concerns, and that is not rectified in this legislation. Of course, that could come through regulations extending this program, so I'd be interested to find out if that is something that is still on the table from this minister because it is an important question. We have to continue to ensure that we are supporting these organizations through any means necessary, as best as possible. If we get to a point where that date comes and these organizations have still, you know, lost 25 per cent, if not more, of their revenue, then we need to do something to continue supporting them.

Another question I have in regard to the CECRA program, the end date for that being, I believe, the end of June. Within the legislation before us, Bill 23, Commercial Tenancies Protection Act, or, I guess, in the press release that was sent out by the UCP government and the minister, it explained that if one of these businesses has accessed the CECRA program, if the tenant had accessed it, they wouldn't be eligible for the protections that are in Bill 23. So my question is: if they had accessed it for the three months – April, May, June – and the program ends and they get to a place where they no longer have any subsidy or support for their businesses while they continue to struggle, potentially even still at a loss of 70 per cent of their revenue, will this legislation continue to not protect them, even though they can no longer access the CECRA program? I think that's an important question.

If it's the case that if they ever took a dollar from the federal or provincial government for the CECRA program, they are no longer eligible to get support on this piece of legislation, then I would once again ask why this government did not bring this legislation and this idea forward when the federal government was introducing the CECRA program, because, once again, they need to have all these facts in front of them before they can make the right decision for their businesses.

I just want to take a moment to highlight that on April 30 there was an *Edmonton Journal* document talking about industry associations who were saying that the CECRA program was not going to help many of the small businesses that it claimed it would. This association went on to say that the program is deeply flawed due to a lack of details and a complicated system. We look at the CECRA program, and at the end of the day the landlord makes the decision whether the small businesses that are in those properties are going to be able to access that funding. If the tenant disagrees with the decision that the landlord has made, as far as I know, they once again have to go to court. At a time when neither the landlord or the tenant has the money to go through this process, I question why there aren't better dispute resolution services put in place, especially when we're talking about establishing and creating and pushing out this important program.

Just to take a moment and look at some of the sections within this legislation, section 5(1) goes on – I don't want to stress this too much.

Notwithstanding any rights under a tenancy agreement, or any notice that may have been provided under a tenancy agreement, a landlord shall not increase the rent payable under an existing tenancy agreement during the period beginning on March 17 . . . and ending on the emergency end date . . .

that's within this legislation.

As far as I can tell – I would appreciate if the minister can clarify – if there was an existing increase in place before the pandemic hit,

potentially the tenancy agreement said that every month or few months the rent would go up by X amount of dollars. If that agreement was in place before this legislation was brought forward and before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the landlord would continue to be able to raise their rent, and this legislation does not protect those tenants from that. That's how I read that. If I'm wrong, then I would appreciate clarification on that piece as well.

You can see in here that there is a very long list of what might make a tenant ineligible to access this funding. As far as I can tell, it's relatively reasonable, so I can appreciate that and also appreciate that in section 3 it goes on to describe that if an increase had already happened with a new agreement that was put in place during the pandemic, the money must be returned. I appreciate that this government is considering that aspect. It's an important one because the last thing, in my opinion, that landlords should be doing right now is trying to increase rent on those organizations.

You know, I think back to some of the decisions that this government has made, even looking back to the corporate tax break, the \$4.7 billion that we often go on about over the four years that this government will be in power, and I think about how that money could have been better spent instead of giving this money to corporations that were already profiting over \$500,000 a year. I think about the small businesses that we could have supported, specifically through this time, if we had earmarked some of that money to ensure that – whether it be hailstorms in Calgary or flooding in Calgary or fires in Fort McMurray or a COVID pandemic across our province, what we could have done with that funding to ensure that that money is making it directly to whether it be landlords or the tenants.

What we're seeing through the federal program, the CECRA program, is that the landlord has a lot of the responsibility and the decision-making ability, and, unfortunately, that's leaving a lot of tenants unable to access that program, whether it be because they don't meet that very high threshold of a 70 per cent reduction in their revenue or because the landlord decides to not make that decision.

I really question the government's decision to move forward with money that – we saw much of it spent on stock buybacks for these large corporations. We saw corporations using that money to actually move out of the Alberta jurisdiction, and there was nothing in that program that the UCP offered to ensure that that money would stay here in the province, that that money would be reinvested in ensuring more person power on the floors of those shops.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 23. Let me see if I can pick up where my hon. colleague for Edmonton-West Henday left off. I'll begin with a few thoughts, though, on the urgency of this legislation. I have spent a lot of time talking to small businesses in my constituency certainly and beyond, actually, but most of my longer conversations have, of course, been with business owners in Lethbridge, and there are a few things that stand out here.

One, this legislation comes before us a full quarter after the declaration of the state of emergency and the broad sort of global, or at least on this continent, recognition that we were in a pandemic and then all of the emergency measures. A full quarter is a long time in business planning. These three months in particular – it'll be fourth months by the time that this bill passes, gets royal assent,

gets out there into the world, gets moving. That is, I think, a regrettable and unnecessary delay on the part of this government to both bring in the temporary ban on commercial evictions – that's something that was well within the government's wheelhouse to be able to do in the immediate weeks after the declaration of the state of emergency.

5:50

There is no question that the worry and stress created by having no income, no cash flow whatsoever for many businesses that were forced to close and then also no clarity on where they stood vis-à-vis their commercial tenancy arrangements and no guidance on how to proceed really did cause many people to simply say: this is too much. Three months is actually a long time to think about the future of your business, and that is indeed what has happened. I know personally that at least two small-business friends of mine just decided not to open back up again entirely. Others are still deliberating on what they're going to do, but that's two on one street in downtown Lethbridge. You know, all of these decisions are going to be individual to the family and other circumstances inherent in their business, but these were busy places, and they will no longer be those hubs of community activity and economic development and contribution to our community in downtown Lethbridge that they were.

I have to think that even just a signal both to small-business people but also to landlords and others, a market signal of government intent and an indication that help was on the way would have created the conditions where many small-business people would have been able to make different decisions than they have over the last quarter. The fact is that taking three months to even provide a very simple and straightforward temporary ban on commercial evictions has meant that small-business people were left twisting in the wind without clarity. That was unnecessary, and I think it was an abrogation of responsibility on the part of many of the government ministers.

That brings us to the specific – of course, there's the timing of this legislation, but then there are the actual contents of this bill. There, too, we find a number of shortcomings that we could easily have seen coming. They are obvious shortcomings that certainly small-business people of various kinds – you know, sole proprietors, contractors, small technology companies, small manufacturing companies, service companies of various kinds, retail establishments, and restaurant establishments – have all talked to us about. They've talked, I'm going to assume, to each and every one of the MLAs on the floor of this House because they have certainly talked to me, not just within the boundaries of the city of Lethbridge, certainly both east and west – I have been in quite detailed conversations with the business community – but also across the province.

There are a couple of things here that are obvious misreads and misfires in terms of what this bill actually does. One of them is that this bill provides no relief measures for rent and lease payments. A deferral is nice, but it has come far too late in the game for people to be able to plan what the next quarter looks like. It is only until August 31, never mind the next two or three quarters.

This bill also provides no guidance to commercial tenants whatsoever, and this is something that we heard on the residential side as well. The bill provides for a rental agreement, and that's a good thing, I think. Certainly, we saw this on the residential side, and I supported that in the government's previous legislation on the residential side. Having an agreement between both parties is a really, really important piece of clarity for everyone involved. Certainly, commercial landlords oftentimes are better capitalized. They have more assets. They can spread their risk around. They're

more consolidated than, you know, somebody who owns a revenue property, right? Having that flexibility of having something decent and fair and reasonable for both parties to enter into is the right way to go, but providing absolutely no guidance on what that would look like, what is actually fair and reasonable, what one's recourse on either side might be for failure to, I guess, meet the terms of that agreement – no real way.

Here we see in commercial that we have even fewer tools at our disposal in terms of dispute resolution than the still very partial dispute resolution process that we see in the landlord-tenant side on the residential issues. I think that that is the big thing. You know, when the answer is, "Go to court," well, first of all, who has money for that? Even commercial property owners, commercial landlords at this point are going to, I think, be looking at the relative cost benefit and wonder whether that is helpful to them at all if they have a cross-threading or misunderstanding of what that rental agreement actually entails. So there's that piece.

Then there's the piece around just clogging up the courts. I mean, the court system has been placed under enormous duress for the three months of the pandemic. It is one of the untold stories. We hear a lot from small business. We hear from child care providers. We hear a lot from retail and restaurant establishments, those kinds of folks. But the courts have also been under tremendous stress, so to add to the court burden in ways that, you know, are administrative in nature, that aren't necessarily about making sure that we have justice for people who have been the victims and survivors of actual crimes, I really don't think that that is what we want to be doing right now because it's going to take the court system a long time to get through the backlog.

We shouldn't be creating a backlog just because we failed to in any way, shape, or form address the obvious thing in this bill, which is that there should be some form of dispute resolution, even if that means some kind of mediation process that both parties might have access to, to keep this stuff out of the courts, even if it's in a more – like, not an actual tribunal, but there are ways to address these matters.

The other piece that I think is really missing here is any kind of hardship fund. Now, the CFIB and other jurisdictions have called for a hardship fund. Certainly, the New Democrats here in Alberta have said: look, small businesses, in particular on the retail and restaurant side but many of the personal services, gyms and others, really had a lot of hardship. There were many who, because of that lack of clarity, are making decisions now to close down. Many of these establishments are actually anchors in our smaller downtowns as well.

You know, I can't speak for the larger cities, but I can speak for a smaller city. To lose even one, two, three of those kinds of establishments that bring people into a downtown that are more than just a bank and a post office but actually contribute to the community life in the downtown space and to have so many of those types of businesses that were forced to close, that had to wait till stage 2, even, and still haven't had assistance with the reopening, to not have some kind of grant response when Alberta is imminently capable of such a thing, either through ATB or other mechanisms, I thought was a real missed opportunity to ensure economic and community development for everyone and ensure a diversity of restaurant, dining, personal services, other establishments that were first to close. This is to say nothing of some of the businesses that just had to change their operations considerably. I'm thinking here of various kinds of service companies, manufacturing companies, those sorts.

Mr. Speaker, there should be that hardship fund, particularly for those who were forced to close, particularly for those who were not covered by . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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