



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, July 7, 2020

Day 40

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Second Session

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Horner  
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Reid  
Stephan  
Toor

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Ceci  
Dang  
Goodridge  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Smith  
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Guthrie  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
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Schmidt  
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Sweet  
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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Deol  
Ganley  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
Walker  
Williams

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Sigurdson, R.J.

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Long  
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Singh  
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 7, 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.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I am most pleased to welcome guests from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills who are seated in my gallery: Lance Moran and Chris Falloon from Campbell Oilfield Rentals and Taylor Langford of ThinkTank Products. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are family members of the Minister of Indigenous Relations. They are the minister's niece Allison Rau, a third-year medical student at the University of Alberta, and her partner, Kevin Lucas. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

### Health Care System

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the lead-up to the last election the Premier stood in front of Albertans and signed a document that promised that a United Conservative government would maintain a universally accessible, publicly funded health care system. Albertans took him at his word. They trusted him. But instead of protection of our public health care, all this government has delivered is cuts, chaos, and broken promises.

It began with the MacKinnon report, a collection of skewed data and cherry-picked statistics orchestrated to provide political cover for gutting our public health care system. This was followed by the EY report on AHS, a document that recommended shutting down rural hospitals and ERs and mass privatization of continuing care and lab services to achieve supposed savings that have already been demonstrated to be vastly overstated. Both laid the groundwork for the Minister of Health's war on Alberta doctors. After bad-faith negotiations and tearing up their contracts, he used the cover of a global pandemic to grind them down and unilaterally impose sweeping cuts and changes designed to undermine them and their ability to fight for and provide quality patient care. No sooner had this government lifted the public health emergency than they charged forward with their plans to carve up and sell out the very same public laboratory system they spent months praising and trying to take credit for.

Now they introduce Bill 30, a bill crafted to strap a rocket to their plans to force more American-style private profit into our public health care system. This government isn't satisfied to just give a \$4.7 billion handout to corporate stakeholders. Now they want

those shareholders to be able to profit off sick and injured Albertans. That's not patient-centred care. That's profit centred, because that's what this government does; they put profits ahead of people. They're deliberately weakening the public health care system we all rely on by moving ever more surgeries, tests, and other procedures into the private sector.

Albertans deserve better than this failed ideological experiment engineered to let corporate profits soar while patients suffer. I and my colleagues will fight for that better with amendments to Bill 30 and, if the UCP won't listen, stand against it because on this side of the House we support public health care in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche has the call.

### Indigenous Participation in Energy Development

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We often hear that foreign-funded special interests' efforts to try and stop the development of Canada's oil and gas industry are standing up for indigenous people. In most cases this is just an excuse for left-wing activists who want to obstruct our industry and Canada's economic progress. In fact, in many cases those who are hurt most by those who obstruct the economic development are those who live in many of our rural indigenous communities.

Many of the indigenous communities I've spoken to sincerely want to be partners in prosperity and support the responsible development of our oil and gas industry. In fact, there are numerous indigenous corporations within my riding that have been partners in prosperity for decades. For example, Goodfish Lake Business Corporation has been operating for more than 40 years manufacturing fire-retardant coveralls, industrial laundry, and dry cleaning, and they've recently expanded their business to make reusable face masks. There's TJs oilfield contracting, Dene Sky Site Services, Black Scorpion Contracting, and the list, truly, goes on.

Researchers at the Canadian Energy Centre have helped quantify First Nations' support for oil and gas development and the economic benefits that it brings to their communities. In British Columbia, of those First Nations that are affected by oil and gas development, researchers found that 40 were explicitly in favour of natural gas development and that none were explicitly opposed. In Alberta support was even more explicit: 46 First Nations said that they supported oil and gas development, and zero said that they were opposed.

It turns out that environmental radicals are the ones ignoring the wishes of Alberta's indigenous people and all those across Canada who support energy development. Mr. Speaker, while the foreign-funded eco radicals continue to obstruct the prosperity of Canada's indigenous people, let us say with a very clear voice: Alberta supports indigenous participation in oil and gas; Alberta supports moving indigenous communities to be true partners in prosperity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

### Victims of Crime Fund

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak on the victims of crime fund and the work our government is doing to ensure that victims of crime receive the support they need when they need it. I'm proud to serve as co-chair of the Victims of Crime Working Group alongside my colleague the hon. Member for Airdrie-East. We will review the financial benefit program for victims, and we'll consult on the creation of a new victims' assistance model, all with the aim of improving the supports and services received by victims of crime in Alberta.

With the recent passing of Bill 16, the scope of the victims of crime fund has been expanded to include preventative measures through public safety initiatives, initiatives such as the rural Alberta provincial integrated defence, or RAPID, which gives expanded powers to peace officers in regions where the RCMP welcome additional resources to provide effective and comprehensive patrolling. My grandfather used to say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and I couldn't agree more. As we increase the fund and use that revenue to invest in prevention, we will see fewer victims in this province, Mr. Speaker. To me, that's the point. Government's first priority should be to preserve the safety of its citizens.

Moving forward, we will ensure that these preventative measures are working hand in hand with an effective victims' service delivery framework. I'm excited to begin consultations with victims and victims' support organizations to learn what is working well and determine what needs to change so that we can make the system better, because, Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the best services that can be provided.

In 2016 the Auditor General found that Alberta had the financial capacity to provide the support needed but lacked a plan and strategy to deliver optimal service. That's where the working group comes in. Our commitment to victims and Albertans is that we will take this feedback given and ensure that our recommendations reflect what victims feel they actually need. This government is taking steps in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to be part of the team which is leading the way in crime prevention and victim support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Policies

**Member Irwin:** This past weekend, like so many Albertans, I headed to the great outdoors. With my seven-year-old nephew as my steady guide we explored lakes around the Wainwright area. As we were exploring, I reflected upon just how important it is that we protect our public spaces. The beauty across Alberta is unsurpassed, yet in the Wainwright area alone 375 campsites are to be lost, all because of this government's plans to privatize and delist parks. I reflected with sadness that my nephew might not get to have the same adventures that I had as a kid growing up in Alberta's parks and campgrounds.

But it doesn't need to be this way. Governments make choices. They can choose to support people, they can choose to protect the public good, or they can choose to sacrifice people and the public good in favour of increasing profits for huge corporations and shareholders. Health care, education, the environment: these are just a few areas where these choices are so critical. The government's privatizing of health care is just one example but a significant one. They're choosing to privatize health care, including lab services, at a time when the need for strong, publicly funded health care has never been greater. In the midst of a pandemic they're choosing to privatize services for persons with developmental disabilities. They're attacking some of the most medically fragile people to save a few dollars. It's an unconscionable choice, but they're making it.

Let's talk about what I started with, the choice to privatize hundreds of parks. No government before has felt it necessary to attack something that Albertans of all ages, backgrounds, and political stripes enjoy, our natural heritage. It's no surprise that tens of thousands of you have written your MLAs to say: "Stop. Don't make this choice. Choose instead to protect the province that we love."

Speaking of choices, each of us here made a choice to get involved in politics, and I bet that if I asked you why you did, you'd

say that it was to serve and to help people. If that's the case, it's time to start acting like it. It's time to choose people, because if not, in the next election they won't be choosing you.

1:40

### Policing

**Mr. Rutherford:** Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the protests around the world sparked by the senseless killing of George Floyd. Some have called for police forces to be defunded or radically changed. I served in the Edmonton Police Service for 10 years, and I know that police officers interact with people and problems that most people have no idea about or may not have the ability to handle themselves. Some police officers have committed crimes, and they deserve to be investigated and prosecuted. This is not about making excuses or ignoring a need to look for better ways to serve the public. It's about acknowledging the vast number of officers who risk their lives every day to serve the public and to help people.

What the public hears is such a tiny per cent of what takes place on a daily basis. They will never really know what an officer does. They will not hear about how many times police make a scene safe for paramedics or the many times people who threaten to commit suicide are tracked down and saved. They will not see how many victims of domestic violence are saved from abusive partners, and they will not see the thousands of daily interactions where someone who asks for help receives it. It's okay that people won't see it. Honestly, you don't want to see it. Officers have to see it, and they carry that burden.

Policing is a noble career, and I still believe that the public is supportive of our men and women in uniform. It is not perfect, but I can assure you that the vast majority of officers joined to serve their community and are doing their best to help people in need. Let's not allow a situation to develop where inaction is a safer route than acting. Let's not allow a situation where it is us versus them. Meaningful change comes from an open dialogue. I believe that if people could see the day-to-day work of officers, they too would see a dedicated group of professionals.

Thank you.

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

### PDD Direct Operations

**Ms Renaud:** Thanks. Persons with developmental disabilities, or PDD, is the department that funds staff costs for thousands of disabled Albertans. The total budget is just over \$1 billion. Some people need just a few hours of staff support each week, and others who may be medically fragile or have complex disabilities need 24/7 staffing. The majority of these supports are delivered by nonprofits and some for-profit companies. They take up just under \$1 billion, but there's a tiny piece that is delivered by public-sector workers, and that budget total is \$42 million. That budget line is called direct operations. The UCP has given 90-day notice to this tiny piece, direct operations. They are doing this to cut costs as community service providers are funded at a lower rate and there are no infrastructure or maintenance costs associated.

All disability workers deserve a wage they can live on. When they stay at their jobs, people thrive as a result. People who are medically fragile, who have complex disabilities thrive when they have stable, excellent care. On June 10 the UCP gave parents, guardians, and staff in direct operations 90 days' notice that the UCP would be exploring alternative options. We are now one month into a three-month notice. They've given notice to families who need respite, to medically fragile children who potentially face life in the hospital without Rosecrest. They've given notice to men

and women in their 50s and 60s who have lived in these Calgary and Edmonton group homes for decades. History tells us that when these older Albertans are transitioned away, they end up in long-term care, and we know what happens there.

We're in a global pandemic. These vulnerable Albertans have been kept safe so far, so why knowingly introduce more risk? On behalf of the parents, guardians, staff, and the individuals: stop the notice; stop it before it's too late.

**The Speaker:** Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has a statement to make.

### Bill 1 and Lawful Protests

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition took to her Facebook on March 3 to launch an assault on Bill 1. This is what she had to say: "Bill 1 is immensely flawed legislation. It prohibits the mere presence of people in public spaces, and gives Government Cabinet the discretion to exclude law-abiding people from any place in the province." These were just two sentences in a long rant filled with hyperbole and inaccuracies that only seek to confuse and divide Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to set the record straight on what Bill 1 actually prohibits. Bill 1 protects essential infrastructure such as pipelines, oil and gas sites, utilities, telecom lines and towers, highways, and railways. The bill protects this infrastructure from people entering without permission or under false pretense, destroying infrastructure, and wilfully obstructing, interrupting, or interfering with infrastructure. The bill seeks to shield infrastructure and businesses from any protest that would cause disruption or damage to their operations or their equipment. The bill is essential in securing our post-COVID economic recovery, essential in keeping our businesses and infrastructure protected as we implement our economic recovery plan. To say that this bill would allow the government to exclude law-abiding people from assembling is ridiculous.

The impact of protest on essential infrastructure can be significant. The rail blockades earlier this year caused commodity shipments to back up, adding extra costs and hurting our image as a reliable supplier. That is not only lost profits; that is people's right to work, to feed their families, to care for their loved ones. Blocking railroads, obstructing highways, or interfering with critical infrastructure causes harm to innocent bystanders.

We recognize that peaceful protest is an important right for our democracy, and that will not change. However, the fact remains that your right to protest should not supersede the rights of others to live, work, and provide for their families.

### Oil and Gas Transportation

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I have recently been left wondering if the environmentalists are still celebrating their victory over the defeat of the Energy East pipeline. As most know by now, Irving Oil received permits to transport western Canadian oil to its refinery in Saint John. Instead of doing this by pipeline, they are going to use foreign oil tankers to take the oil from Vancouver and ship it more than 11,000 kilometres down the west coast, then through the Panama Canal, and then up the east coast.

This couldn't be any more ridiculous. We had the opportunity for more investment in Canada, creating jobs and a reliable flow of oil from west to east. Now, Mr. Speaker, we're using tankers instead, those same tankers, I might add, that the environmental groups are so concerned about are killing sea life. In addition, the carbon footprints of these tankers is quite large. In just one year one of

these tankers emits the equivalent of 50 million cars. How much does a pipeline emit? Very little other than the pumping stations required to get it through the line.

Yes, the environmentalists must be so proud. They stopped a 4,600 kilometre pipeline that safely, reliably pumps oil and traded it for tankers that will travel over triple that distance. The end result: western oil is still going to the east, but at a much higher environmental cost.

Common sense in this country has gone. We need real leadership that will stand up to naysayers and use logic when it comes to meeting the energy needs of Canada and the entire world. Demand for oil and gas was only projected to go up, Mr. Speaker, and now it'll go up even more with the added tanker traffic. The best thing we can do for the environment right now is to build pipelines to the east instead of using these tankers. We can even go further and get natural gas to Asia for clean electricity production, instead of coal, with the assistance of more pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, the world needs more Alberta energy, and they need it now.

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

### Fair Deal Panel Report

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In May 2020 the Fair Deal Panel, which travelled across Alberta and listened to Albertans, submitted their final report. This report was tabled as the Alberta economy continued its precipitous slide. Our energy industry, the economic engine of the nation, continued to be under attack from a wide range of suspects, including the previous NDP government, an international environmental movement, and a number of dictatorial competitor energy states.

Of most concern is the federal vision for the energy industry in Alberta. If the Liberal agenda is pursued, it will significantly damage the Alberta energy industry. The federal government would reduce our GHG emissions by 30 per cent from our 2018 emissions by 2050, and under the Paris agreement and a net zero philosophy the Alberta economy will stall, the industry will shed jobs, and the economic future of Alberta will continue to struggle. Actual production of oil and gas could shrink by 25 per cent or more.

Now, it is no wonder that the recommendations of the recently released Fair Deal Panel were met with great interest by the people of Alberta. Three of these recommendations – 10, 11, and 16 – address the worrisome confluence of the federal government's intrusion into the Alberta economy through environmental legislation. The recommendations of the Fair Deal Panel direct the government to collaborate with other like-minded provinces to bring forward market-based approaches to environmental protection in order to reduce GHG emissions. It calls upon the government to challenge federal legislation that affects provincial jurisdiction. Lastly, it will be critical to secure a seat at any future federal negotiations of international agreements affecting Alberta's interests.

These three recommendations generated by Albertans are going to be critical in protecting Alberta's economic future. Albertans have set a path forward in this report, and through the efforts of this government and our recovery plan, Alberta will receive a fair deal within this Confederation and the world's economy.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### Corporate Taxation and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's signature economic policy is a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. It's also a proven failure. Between its introduction last summer and the pandemic the Premier presided over the loss of about 50,000 Alberta jobs. Now the Premier has a new economic plan. It's the same as the old one: billions of dollars of corporate giveaways to shareholders and banks with absolutely no requirement to create a single job. Why is the Premier doubling down on a proven failure instead of finally developing a real plan to create jobs for Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, as economists across the country and around the world will confirm, reducing the disincentive for companies to invest to create jobs actually increases jobs, which is why, for example, Janet Riopel, president of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce said that accelerating the job-creation tax cut will help job creators focus on what's most important for our economy right now, rebuilding the struggling businesses and bringing more people back to work. What the NDP actually wants to do in the biggest economic crisis since the '30s is to increase taxes on job creators by 50 per cent. That would be a massive job killer.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Husky pocketed \$233 million of the handout, laid off hundreds of Albertans, and then invested the money in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and the United States. EnCana walked away with \$55 million as they pulled their headquarters out of Calgary and south of the border. This was all before the pandemic and the oil crash. The corporate handout was a bad plan then, and it's a terrible plan now. Alberta needs hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we need them quickly. Why is the Premier stuck in the past with a corporate handout that leaves everyday Albertans behind?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, why does the socialist leader characterize a reduction in the tax burden as a "handout"? A handout is a subsidy. A handout is when the government writes someone a cheque. Allowing job creators to not be punished with high tax rates is not a handout. It is, as economists have confirmed, the strongest possible policy signal to increase private-sector investment, the kind of investment that was driven out of this province during the NDP's disastrous four-year reign, one of the reasons they were fired by Albertans.

**Ms Notley:** Alberta will succeed in a global economy when we invest in each other, not by hollowing out the services that families and business rely on. To pay for the Premier's failed corporate handout that's lost 50,000 jobs so far, he's caused a rural health care crisis, he's attacked doctors, he's pulled support from kids with autism, he's kicked 60,000 people off their drug coverage, he's raised taxes and fees on every single Albertan, and that, Mr. Speaker, is just the beginning. This plan only makes the rich richer at the expense of the rest of Alberta. When will the Premier start sticking up for the rest of Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent in the midst of a downturn. Guess what happened? We ended up with a huge flight of business and investment away from the province. We ended up with 180,000 people that were unemployed. We ended up with a fiscal crisis inherited by this government, and we ended up with lower corporate income tax revenues after the NDP raised the rates. Under this plan the total

receipts from corporate taxes will actually go up because we're growing rather than shrinking the economy in the future.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, if the members opposite hadn't broken the law to avoid the annual report, we would see that in fact the economy has been shrinking under this Premier's watch.

### Health Care System

**Ms Notley:** Now, yesterday we saw this government continue on its rush to bring American-style health care to Alberta. More private clinics means more precious health care dollars diverted to corporate profit-making. Why won't the Premier admit that this profit-centred care is simply another step in his long-standing efforts to bring failed two-tier American health care to Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition will know that making a statement like "the members opposite are breaking the law" would be unparliamentary, and I'm sure she won't be doing it in the future.

**Mr. Kenney:** I'm sure she will be, Mr. Speaker, because their modus operandi is defamation. You know what? I think they're now batting zero for about 20 ethics complaints. The Attorney General was vindicated in another specious complaint by the NDP.

In terms of health care, Mr. Speaker, news flash. Virtually every practitioner in the province operates as a professional corporation: under the NDP, under this government, in every other province. Fifteen per cent of surgeries performed under the NDP were done in private, chartered surgical facilities. We're simply expanding that to get more surgeries done at lower cost to reduce wait times.

**Ms Notley:** The Premier apparently believes that Bill 30 will entice more doctors to sign a deal directly with the Health minister. I have news for the Premier. The paperwork is not the problem on that field. This Health minister has torn up the contract with Alberta doctors and then has embarked on a campaign to smear them and attack them over and over and over again. Why would any doctor ever sign a deal with a government that has proved itself to be so fundamentally hostile and untrustworthy to health care and to doctors in particular?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this government constantly expresses support for our physicians and says that not only should they be compensated fairly but even generously. In fact, we support them continuing to be the best-compensated physicians in Canada. But I have a question for the NDP. Why is it that for four years they froze salaries for nurses, for janitors in the hospitals, but they oversaw a 23 per cent increase in compensation for some of the wealthiest Albertans, the physicians? Why did they say no to nurses but wrote an open cheque to doctors? Why did they do that?

**Ms Notley:** Well, considering that the Premier is sitting in the glass house that is made of his threats to fire nurses across this province, that is seriously super rich.

Now, Bill 30 creates more government appointees on boards that oversee health professionals, but this is actually about politicizing our health care providers in Alberta, undermining their ability to work objectively and independently and on the basis on science and evidence. Based on this government's past record of appointments, we know this plan has nothing to do with public oversight and certainly nothing to do with diversity. If I'm wrong, will the

Premier commit today to supporting an amendment to secure diverse . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, the NDP had their chance to bring in greater accountability for physicians who violate the ethical codes of their profession, but they didn't, Mr. Speaker. You know, I recall that it was thanks to the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore here that we brought in legislation – we compelled the former government to bring in legislation to withhold medical licences from practitioners who were found guilty of having sexually assaulted their patients. Now, why was that allowed to happen? Perhaps in part because the college did not have sufficient representation of the general public. That will be corrected by Bill 30.

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

#### **Premier's Speech Writer's Remarks on Residential Schools**

**Ms Notley:** Yesterday Grand Chief Arthur Noskey of Treaty 8 was here to deliver a message to the government of Alberta. Quote, chiefs of the sovereign treaty nations are amazed at the level of disrespect brandished by the Premier, who continues to promote or employ an individual who has published anti First Nation views that are harmful, divisive, dehumanizing, and racist, to say the least. End quote. The Premier has waffled and evaded this question for more than 10 days. Premier, will you show the Treaty 8 chiefs some respect and dismiss your racist speech writer today?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP resorts to character defamation, to character assassination, to the politics of personal destruction. We heard that kind of language all through the last campaign. Who can forget when her hand-picked candidate in Edmonton-South West said that people should, quote, vote as if their skin colour is not white while running against a candidate of African origin, who they accused of being associated with white supremacy? Albertans rejected the NDP's policy of personal destruction then, just as we do so now.

**Ms Notley:** This is too important for the kind of distraction games that the Premier is playing right now. Now, Adam North Peigan, president of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta, and AFN Regional Chief Marlene Poiras have called for your speech writer to be fired. The confederacy of Treaty 6 chiefs has called for your speech writer to be fired. Chief Roy Fox and Chief Ouray Crowfoot of the Blackfoot Confederacy have called for your speech writer to be fired. Why is this Premier's personal relationship with his racist speech writer more important to him than Alberta's treaty relationships with First Nations?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I speak for the government of Alberta. It was two weeks ago in this place when I spoke about the racist nature of the aboriginal residential schools. I was part of a federal government that made an official apology for those residential schools. What I will not tolerate is the NDP's politics of personal destruction. They do it all the time. They don't care. That's a party – they had a member of their last cabinet who said that, quote, the Bible should be thrown in the trash, who referred to oil as modern slavery.

**Ms Notley:** Wow. The Premier has really done his research to defend a man who says that Black Lives Matter is racist and incites violence, a man who describes Islam as perverted and refugees as

barbarians. He's defending a man who tried to erase the murder of thousands of indigenous children and the lived experience of abuse by at least 150,000 more. The Premier says: personnel is policy. He is right. This is about the Premier, not his speech writer. Why is the Premier defending such a foul racist and keeping him in the highest office in this province? Why?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I very clearly expressed the views of the government of Alberta about the evil, I said, nature of aboriginal residential schools. This government has done more, I believe, than any modern government to move from reconciliation to reconciliation of economic opportunity. [interjection] Exactly: to walk the talk. I know that the NDP loves to focus on identity politics. This government likes to focus on real equality of opportunity for people who for too long have been excluded from opportunity in our society.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has the next question.

#### **Keystone XL Pipeline Project**

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier made the largest single bet in Alberta's history on the Keystone XL pipeline, a jaw-dropping \$7.5 billion commitment. There were always big risks to this bet, but the Premier assured Albertans that the project would proceed because he would create, and I quote, facts on the ground. Yesterday the U.S. Supreme Court introduced a new fact that nobody can ignore. No construction can occur in America until at least 2021. A key element of the Premier's strategy is now in shambles. To the Premier: what's your plan now with these new facts on the ground?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, they've gone from defamation to dishonesty. Just another day at the office for the NDP. The U.S. Supreme Court made no such decision. Construction continues, Mr. Speaker; it simply means that the project proponent, TC Energy, must apply individually for water crossing licences while the case continues to proceed to the Ninth Circuit Court in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that he's asking the question and he's distorting the facts is because he and his party have always opposed Keystone XL, just like they opposed Northern Gateway, just like they've always, at heart, wanted to keep it in the ground. They're opposed to pipelines. We're getting them built.

**Mr. Sabir:** The Premier told Albertans that he had done substantial due diligence and legal analysis, but he never told Albertans that the risk was at the Supreme Court. Instead, he told Albertans that he worried about a potential Joe Biden presidency and a presidential permit for the Keystone XL project. Mr. Speaker, \$7.5 billion is a lot of money. Why is the Premier refusing to publicly disclose the details of this deal and the risks that Albertans face? It's Albertans' money, after all, Premier, not yours.

**Mr. Kenney:** Firstly, we have disclosed the parameters of the investment. Secondly, it's not \$7.5 billion because \$6 billion of that is a loan guarantee for construction next year, not at risk in the equity investment this year. Thirdly, the U.S. Supreme Court made no such decision yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Construction continues. Fourthly, the NDP always opposed the Keystone XL pipeline for the same reason they had MLAs in front of this Legislature last year saying: no more pipelines. Mr. Speaker, Albertans hired this government to get pipelines built. That's exactly what we're doing.

**Mr. Sabir:** We committed 50,000 barrels to the Keystone XL project. Nothing can be further from the truth than that we didn't support Keystone XL.

Mr. Speaker, \$6,800: that's how much a typical family of four has invested in the Keystone XL pipeline because this Premier decided that it was an excellent strategic bet. Families are struggling right now. Many are losing jobs, and \$7.5 billion would go a long way to address issues facing Albertans. Albertans didn't get to make that choice; the Premier did it for them. Alberta families want to see . . .

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

**Mr. Kenney:** You see where they're going now, Mr. Speaker? I mean, they start by fibbing, and then they turn it into an absolutely unbelievable nose stretcher. Now they're claiming that a loan guarantee to support an equity investment, which shows up as an asset on the provincial balance sheet, constitutes an expenditure in the current year. You know what? Because they . . . [interjection] Oh, she's upset. You know why the NDP leader is yelling in the Chamber? It's not only because she disrespects decorum in this place but because she always opposed the Keystone XL pipeline, and she can't stand having that pointed out.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

#### Economic Recovery

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our government announced Alberta's economic recovery plan, a comprehensive effort to get Albertans back to work as we relaunch our economy as COVID-19 public health measures are lifted. I know my constituents are eager to get back to work and help build Alberta's economy. One of the measures that will be of great benefit to many workers is the unprecedented infrastructure program that will get Albertans working on many shovel-ready projects across this province. To the Premier: can you tell the House about some of the key infrastructure projects that we will be building and the positive impacts that they will have for Alberta workers?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was proud to stand with the Finance minister eight days ago to launch Alberta's economic recovery plan, which is the boldest and most ambitious plan to create jobs presented by any provincial government in Canada and, I think, in modern Alberta history, one element of which, of course, is the acceleration of the job-creation tax cut to make Alberta a magnet for new job-creating private-sector investment but also the largest build Alberta program in our history, a \$10 billion capital investment this year alone, larger per capita than any other government across the provinces, to create 50,000 jobs this year.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier. Given that another key part of our economic recovery plan is the acceleration and immediate implementation of the job-creation tax cut and given that this means that Albertans will become the most tax competitive jurisdiction in Canada and puts us among the most competitive jurisdictions in North America . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** We already were.

**Ms Glasgo:** . . . can the Premier tell the House and all Albertans and explain to the members opposite that this tax cut is expected to

create jobs and will incentivize job creators to move to Alberta or expand their existing operations?

**Mr. Kenney:** Sure. Mr. Speaker, I heard a member opposite say that we already were the most competitive. Not under the NDP after they raised business taxes by 20 per cent at the height of a recession to generate less corporate tax revenue. We ended up with higher business taxes than Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, one of the reasons we saw job-creating investment flee the province. According to both professors Mintz and Dahlby and other experts this job-creation tax cut is estimated to create 55,000 full-time, good-paying, private-sector jobs when we need them most.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier. Given that the economic recovery plan is deliberately targeting growing and emerging sectors and given that by doing this, we can continue to diversify Alberta's economy and given that this government has indicated that there will be multiple sector-specific strategies to facilitate these goals, can the Premier tell the House what kinds of industries this province will be targeting and some of the steps that will be taken to ensure that Alberta is the best place for these growing sectors to do business and create jobs for hard-working Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The build Alberta infrastructure investment, we estimate, will create 50,000 full-time jobs throughout the course of just that one initial year in projects that help to enhance long-term economic productivity for Alberta in all sorts of key sectors, from agriculture to forestry to innovation. There will be a series of sectoral strategies released as well, including, for example, the new incentive for investment in innovation and tech industries so that we not only build the Alberta economy but diversify it at the same time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising with a question.

2:10

#### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday UCP MLAs voted to kill a bill that would have stopped this Premier from taking Albertans out of the Canada pension plan. It would seem that this Premier has been plotting to go after the CPP for decades. In the late '90s he dubbed the CPP a Ponzi scheme on multiple occasions. Premier, are all of the games you're playing actually part of a decades-long personal vendetta against the CPP, and are you willing to destroy Albertans' retirements just to fulfill your personal grudge?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, just another episode in the politics of personal distraction by the NDP. They don't want to talk about the merits of the issue. So what do they have? Personal insults and defamation. Here's the fundamental difference. They trust Justin Trudeau and Bay Street to invest our pensions. We trust Albertans to make a decision about the future of our pensions. They don't want Albertans to have the choice. We do, which is why we're doing a deep technical study on the prospective merits, which could allow us to keep \$3 billion in Alberta to improve benefits, to reduce premiums. Ultimately, Albertans will have the final say in a referendum.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that in the House of Commons the Premier stated that the Canada pension plan should be renamed “the Canada Ponzi plan” and given that he’s now ignoring tens of thousands of Albertans who have signed a petition at [handsoffmynccp.ca](http://handsoffmynccp.ca) and given the overwhelming evidence from experts that there is little to be gained and much to be lost by taking pensions out of the CPP, to the Minister of Finance: why are you ignoring the evidence when it comes to the CPP? To humour the Premier, or do you also think the CPP is a Ponzi scheme?

**Mr. Kenney:** I congratulate her for getting every NDP member in the province to sign her online petition, Mr. Speaker, but we think there are another 3 and a half million Albertans who should have an opportunity to express themselves on this.

I have a question for the NDP. Why are they afraid of letting Albertans determine their own future in the federation when it comes to a pension plan where we are the massive net contributors? Why does she think younger Albertans should subsidize pensions in other parts of the country? Why does she think Bay Street knows better how to invest that money than Albertans?

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier’s bizarre and shocking attacks on the CPP have been proven totally and completely wrong and given that more than 3,000 Albertans made public submissions in support of Bill 203, the Pension Protection Act, and given that the UCP members alone voted not to have those submissions made public, probably because they’re afraid it will prove this Premier’s plan is overwhelmingly opposed, to the Premier: since your UCP MLAs blocked making these important submissions public, where can I hand deliver the more than 750 I was copied on? Your office?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, will the member commit that none of the 10,000 New Democrats who signed her online petition will be getting fundraising appeals from the NDP as a result? I suspect not. Uh-oh; just another NDP fundraising gambit. I’ll tell you what. When Albertans get a chance to make a decision on this in a referendum, there won’t be any NDP fundraising appeal attached to it. It’ll be a democratic decision based on whether we should repatriate \$3 billion a year to this province or let Justin Trudeau continue to run the pension program.

### Coal Development Policies

**Mr. Schmidt:** On a warm Friday afternoon in May this government announced through press release that they were changing the 44-year-old policy that prevented open-pit coal mining in environmentally sensitive areas. Peter Lougheed protected these areas, but this government has decided to destroy them with coal mines. This came as a surprise to many Albertans because as far as I can tell, there were no public consultations on this policy change. To the minister: can you tell us who, if anyone, was consulted on this change?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the NDP continue their practice of making things up. It really is quite ridiculous. Environmental protection remains all across the eastern slopes. The Alberta Energy Regulator continues to regulate. Any coal mine has to go through the exact same process that’s been in place inside this province for decades and follow every environmental rule. What really is at the core of that member’s question is that they are anti any development, anti any job creator, and will do everything that they can to continue their behaviour that

they had when they were in government to drive investment out of this province. We’ll protect our environment, and we’ll put people back to work.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:14.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that I live in hope that one of these days the minister will tell the truth in this House . . .

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** . . . but that it seems like today is not that day and given that some of the land claimed by coal companies for future open-pit coal mining is in the Bighorn area, which contains the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River and this river provides drinking water to many of the people on the prairies, including in his own riding, to the minister: did you tell your own constituents about this change, that will potentially poison their drinking water?

### Speaker’s Ruling Allegations against a Member

**The Speaker:** I think that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is very familiar with the rules. We’ve been over them on a number of occasions. Implying or basically making the accusation that the minister isn’t telling the truth . . .

**Member Irwin:** Well, he just said the same thing.

**The Speaker:** That’s quite possible, and we’ll deal with that at another time.

Although, I think we can all agree that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar made a direct statement implying that the hon. minister of the environment wasn’t telling the truth. As such, he can withdraw and apologize, or we’ll move on to the next question.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

### Coal Development Policies (continued)

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, what a ridiculous comment, to accuse the people of Clearwater county and Rocky Mountain House of poisoning the North Saskatchewan River. My constituents have protected the North Saskatchewan region for decades, long before the NDP even knew that region existed. Here’s the reality. All the protections remain in place inside those areas. All environmental rules will have to be followed inside those areas. Yes, I have talked to my constituents about potential for coal development inside that area, and I can report to you that the people of Clearwater county and Rocky Mountain House are excited for an environmentally friendly coal development to take place there. You know why? It’ll put people to work in our communities.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that most of the people who are going to benefit are Australian shareholders and given that the only record of so-called consultation I can find is in the lobbyist registry and given that the registry states that the minister met with the coal lobby on rescinding the 1976 coal policy and given that coal companies are getting a big chunk of this government’s \$4.7 billion handout, will the minister admit that he’s making this change because he’s putting the interest of Australian coal company shareholders above that of Alberta’s safe drinking water?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the interests that I am putting ahead are people like the Piikani, the Piikani First Nation community in southern Alberta, who have asked for this change and who have publicly said that they know our environmental rules will remain in place, and they are working hard on their coal development down inside that region. That will be developed in an environmentally friendly way. We're doing this for people like the Piikani First Nation community in the Crowsnest Pass area, for people in Rocky Mountain House, for people in Hanna. Let's not forget that that member was part of a government that single-handedly destroyed the community of Hanna when he shut down their coal mines. We'll protect our environment, and we'll put people back to work.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:17 by the hon. Official Opposition deputy House leader.

Now the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul has a question to ask.

### Bill 30

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it must be exhausting to be part of the NDP opposition. Every day they are enraged by something else that is being done to make Alberta a better place. It seems that this week they're after improvements to our health care system and reductions to surgical wait times for thousands of Albertans. This criticism seems a little bit rich coming from members who sat idly by for four years when they could and should have been improving this province instead of simply following the direction of their union boss Gil McGowan. To the Minister of Health: does Bill 30 introduce private health care to our province, as the members opposite seem to be convinced?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, it does not. The cries of "private health care" from the members opposite are total and complete hypocrisy. They funded the same clinics, 42 of them, doing 15 per cent of our surgeries in this province, for four years in government. They watched while wait times went up for four straight years, and they did nothing. Now, Bill 30 will make it easier to approve new chartered surgical facilities in this province so that they can do more publicly funded surgeries for Albertans who are waiting for them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for that insightful answer. Given that the NDP has been clear in their opposition to Bill 30 and the measures contained in this legislation and given that it was this same party who held government for four long years and did nothing to reduce wait times but actually increased wait times, again to the Minister of Health: did the NDP ban private surgery clinics, private labs, and private continuing care providers during their time in government?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. The NDP in government funded independent providers in all of those areas and more, but now in opposition they accuse us of an agenda to fund them as if it were new and as if they'd never heard of it before. Maybe no one told them. Well, I guess, as the

Member for Edmonton-Glenora likes to often say in her press releases: maybe no one told them that they were funding all those independent providers. But, of course, they do know. This is an opposition that just fights for – not fighting for access to care but fighting for access to a waiting list. We're working with independent providers, like they did, but with a key difference. We're going to make care better for Albertans.

2:20

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your answer. Given that the opposition has called this bill an attack on doctors and given that the NDP have no ground to stand on after what they've done to rural physicians and given that there are several models of alternatives to physician compensation that exist in other provinces that Alberta can learn from and model after and that are being asked for by some of our doctors, can the Minister of Health please explain to all members of the Legislature how Bill 30 will impact physicians?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. Bill 30 will make it easier to create new ways of paying physicians other than fee for service, including contracting with a range of organizations that do it like indigenous communities or municipalities. Doctors want alternate payment. The AMA wants alternate payment. The NDP, during their four years in government, did nothing about it, and now they accuse us of moving forward on alternate payment, which they failed to do in their four years. We're doing it. We're doing it while holding our total spending on physician compensation at \$5.4 billion, the highest level per capita in the country.

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

### Technology Industry Development

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Albertans were anxiously awaiting the Premier's so-called Alberta recovery plan. Unfortunately, the announcement was very underwhelming. Support for the tech sector is cut in half from what it could have been in 2019, from \$122.2 million to a mere \$60 million. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. This is just not good enough. Albertans want you to take real action on growing the tech sector. Why won't the government get behind this diversification strategy?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not surprised that the members opposite don't like the measures that we introduced. They would rather introduce a tax credit that is so convoluted and bureaucratic that it doesn't have a single successful applicant for the first six months, like what happened with their Alberta investor tax credit. Our government believes strongly in diversification and in capitalizing on Alberta's advantages and strengths. That's why we're developing a technology and innovation approach, which will bring in investment and create jobs in technology-related sectors, ranging from energy and agriculture to artificial intelligence, digital media, and much more.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you. Given that the minister's speaking points couldn't be further from the truth and are actually quite ludicrous and given that tech companies have already left Alberta or chosen not to come to Alberta such as Wattpad because of this UCP government and given that it's been almost nine months since this government removed supports for the tech sector and given that this makes for more than a year with zero dollars of support from this government, Minister, will you apologize today for the chaos and uncertainty you created in Alberta's tech sector?

**Ms Fir:** Maybe the members opposite will apologize for the chaos their government caused in driving billions of dollars of investment out of our province.

Back to his question. We're introducing a new innovation employment grant, which will make Alberta the most attractive place for technology and innovation investment in Canada. We're recapitalizing the Alberta Enterprise Corporation with \$175 million, which will provide much-needed venture capital into the early-stage technology sector to ensure growth. Mr. Speaker, the member's claim that we're not supporting the tech sector shows the lack of economic capacity and knowledge on that side of the House. Since Budget 2019 Alberta Enterprise Corporation, through their fund partners, has invested more than . . .

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that just this morning in Public Accounts the ministry, her own deputy, talked about all of the investments and jobs that were created here in the province from the tax credits that were introduced by this side of the House and given that this government has killed those tax credits – clearly, it shows how naive and ignorant the members on that side of the House are when it comes to supporting the tech sector – will the minister be the first innovator in the UCP government today and admit that she has no idea how the government can actually support the innovation ecosystem here in Alberta?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you. As I was saying, the member's claim that we're not supporting the tech sector shows a lack of economic capacity and knowledge on that side of the House. As I was saying, since Budget 2019 Alberta Enterprise Corporation, through their fund partners, has invested more than \$54 million in Alberta-based tech start-ups, more than the budget of the investor and digital media tax credits combined. Mr. Speaker, 2019 was a banner year for venture capital start-up investment in Alberta, a 40 per cent increase over the next highest year. This is without the ineffective programs of the previous government being in effect for the majority of the year. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Election Financing

**Ms Ganley:** Last night and over the last several days we've been subjected to multiple lectures by the UCP about their pay-to-play version of democracy. Their credibility on democracy is laughable. When you look at this government's record, you see that it's just empty words. The government fired the Election Commissioner, who was investigating the Premier's own leadership race. How can Albertans believe that this government's attempt to bring big money back into politics is somehow to their benefit?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering this week what side the NDP are going to be on. They don't know if they're coming, they're going, they're coming, they're going. They call referendums antidemocratic power grabs. I do not know how they let those words come out of their mouth, but they continually do. We believe in Albertans. We believe in empowering Albertans with more decision-making power than anywhere else in the country. We're proud of that. You know why? We believe in Albertans. They make the right decisions.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the Justice minister was involved in the UCP leadership race that is now under RCMP investigation for voter fraud and given that he expressed concerns about the very same process, a process the Premier ultimately benefited from, and given that it is clear that all of the UCP's policy comes straight from the Premier's office, Minister, you didn't trust the Premier then; how can you expect Albertans to trust him now, when he is in charge of the government's policy of bringing big money back into politics?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to quote something from the Ethics Commissioner: often with the media and particularly social media, the truth is inconvenient and the facts are of no interest at all. I think that that member's question demonstrates that point very, very clearly. You know what we're going to do? We're going to get big money out of politics. We're going to get their Gil McGowan's \$1.7 million out of politics. I can't wait for that. We're going to get rid of their dark money and make sure Albertans are accountable, that they have their voices heard. That's the right thing to do.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:27.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the Justice minister now lectures this House about democracy but actually tried to cover for the Premier on this scandal by claiming that kamikaze campaigns are a normal part of politics and given that this government took steps to fire the Election Commissioner, who was investigating the same campaign, can the Minister of Justice tell Albertans if he thinks that kamikaze campaigns are still a normal and acceptable part of democracy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, when is the opposition deputy House leader going to apologize for the ethics complaint that they made against the Solicitor General, which he was completely cleared of to date? That's what that member should do. They should apologize for their behaviour. The NDP continues to abuse the Ethics Commissioner process. There are, like, zero wins on that issue, 20 or so times where the Ethics Commissioner has cleared this government. When will the NDP stop wasting legislative officers' time and start respecting Albertans and get to work inside this Chamber instead of accusing people of things that are just not true?

### Economic Recovery and Job Creation

**Ms Lovely:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has put together the most aggressive jobs plan since 2008, when the Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper created the economic action plan. This spending initiative helped Canada to weather the 2008 recession by investing in business and creating jobs in our country. Fast-forward 12 years, and we have put together our own Alberta recovery plan to support our small businesses and get Albertans back on their feet. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism:

how will this aggressive recovery plan help businesses to get the support that they need?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our economic recovery plan is a bold strategy that responds to the economic downturn and builds on our strength with timely, targeted investments and bold policy reforms. It includes \$10 billion in additional infrastructure spending, which will create tens of thousands of jobs while improving Alberta's competitiveness; an acceleration of the job-creation tax cut, giving us the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada; and an innovation employment grant that will attract investment and create high-paying jobs in tech and innovation and much more.

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that with our Alberta recovery plan we have signalled to the world that we are open for business and we want to encourage investment as much as we can and given that we desperately need jobs right now due to the COVID-19 pandemic and low global oil prices and given that we recently announced that we will be opening our trade office in Houston, Texas, soon, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: how will our international trade offices continue to create jobs in Alberta?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for her question. We will refocus Alberta's teams in the world's largest capital markets like London, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore and work closely with the world's leading banks and investors. We will target the largest and fastest growing firms for strategic discussions about moving their teams, major divisions, and headquarters to Alberta, based on the advantage that our economic plan provides to them in lower taxes, faster and clearer regulation, the youngest and best educated talent pool, low cost of living, affordable property, and world-leading quality of life.

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

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that our \$500 million spending on municipal infrastructure will support job creation by developing key projects across the province and given that Alberta desperately needs job creation amid a global crisis and given that already in the Camrose constituency we have created over 150 jobs in my riding as a result of these important investments by our government, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Can you give us an update on how this program is being received across Alberta?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Member for Camrose for the question. We know that municipalities are eager to get shovels in the ground on their infrastructure stimulus projects. I sent a letter last week to advise our municipal leaders to begin the planning and preparation work on their shovel-worthy projects. Going forward, I will be providing more details about how the government will be allocating funds for these shovel-worthy projects in the coming days.

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

### COVID-19 Outbreak at the Misericordia Hospital

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Misericordia hospital in my constituency is the latest site of an extremely concerning COVID-19 outbreak. Eighteen patients and 14 staff have tested positive for the virus so far, and there are many staff members, including neighbours of mine, who have been forced to quarantine while awaiting test results of their own. To the minister: what emergency steps have you taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the Mis? Please be specific. My constituents and the people that use, rely on, and work in this hospital are very concerned and counting on you to act responsibly.

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the very thoughtful question. I think the first thing to say is to remind all Albertans that the Misericordia, as with all of our public hospitals, is safe, continues to be safe for people to attend when they need treatment. We continue to work very closely with AHS and the medical officer of health for the Edmonton zone, Dr. Sikora, who is working with the folks at Covenant to be able to ensure that we are doing the contact tracing. We continue to have the workforce capacity for the contact tracing to be done, for folks to be isolated, and for AHS to continue to have the resources it needs to help . . .

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister was slow to act on COVID-19 outbreaks at JBS and Cargill meat-packing plants and given that it took hundreds getting sick and a few people dying before he even lifted a finger and given that we know that employees at those plants were not given accurate facts by the minister of agriculture about the lack of safety in the plant and given that many of those workers were pressured to keep working despite knowing it was unsafe, to the minister: how can we really trust that under your watch front-line workers at the Mis are not facing similar pressures?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the first question was very thoughtful. That one, perhaps, not so much. Look, we acted and listened to the expert advice that we have from our medical professionals throughout the COVID response, including at our meat-packing plants and our processing plants, as we continue to do. Those medical officers of health in AHS as well as in the ministry are doing their best to work with the folks at Covenant, working with the staff to make sure that the infection and prevention controls are in place as well as making sure that the staff members and the patients are able to be isolated and that they're getting treatment that they need.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that this is the first major COVID-19 outbreak at an acute-care hospital that we have been made aware of during the pandemic and given that we were told that the Misericordia has cut off most patient admissions and transfers while they attempt to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and further given that after it was discovered, the outbreak grew rather than diminished, showing how fragile our acute-care hospital systems are in the face of the pandemic, what went wrong, Minister? What lessons can we learn to prevent and control similar outbreaks in our other hospitals

throughout Alberta so that we do not have a catastrophic loss in patient capacity province-wide? This is deadly serious.

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that what we learned is that our quick response of the government in the beginning of the response to COVID in getting the surge funding of \$500 million to AHS so that it could have the workforce capacity in the ICUs as well as our contact tracers, making sure that we had the testing capacity. That's what we've learned, and that ability, that capacity right now in the ministry and AHS is allowing us to act very quickly in an outbreak like this situation and will continue to allow AHS and the ministry to continue to act very quickly when we have further situations that arise, as we're going to continue to live with COVID in this province.

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

### Anti-Asian Racism

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even in the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic Albertans of Asian descent were reporting increased racism against them and their businesses. Across the country we have seen racially motivated violence and vandalism targeting Asian Canadians. In fact, a majority of Asian Canadians say that they have experienced racism related to the pandemic. A recent poll says that a majority of Canadians are aware of rising anti-Asian racism, and a full 12 per cent of respondents openly admitted resentment towards Asian Canadians. What action has the Minister of Justice taken to address anti-Asian racism in Alberta, and can he at least be specific and name the programs?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much for the question. The most important thing that we can do is to shine big bright lights on what is going on. One of the things I want to make very clear is that our Premier, at the very beginning when there were any – any – ideas of racism at all, stood in front of this Legislature and actively made sure to understand that racism will not be tolerated in this province. We very much appreciate the question that is coming, but understand that racism will not be tolerated on this side of the House.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Health told the world that he didn't like living across the street from the Chinese consulate and looked forward to moving and given that Minister of Health has been the face of the Alberta government throughout this pandemic and given that he has still not apologized for this racist remark, has the Minister of Justice or the minister of culture advised the Minister of Health to apologize for this blatant racism?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, this is completely ridiculous that the member is digging up and taking out of context a social media tweet from 2013. He's making it sound like this was done yesterday. He makes it sound like it was a racist comment. I take offence to that comment. He has taken that comment out of context. He is being completely disrespectful to this Chamber for asking questions like that.

**The Speaker:** I have no problem with you answering the question, but it does need to be done through the chair.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like: no, the minister will not apologize.

Given that the Premier contributed to this anti-Asian racism when he told national media that Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief medical officer of health, was being controlled by the Chinese government and given that the Premier was recently called out for this by his own co-chair of his Anti-Racism Advisory Council, has the Minister of Justice, the minister of culture, or the Minister of Health advised the Premier that his baseless smearing of Dr. Tam was also racist against Asian Canadians?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women has said, our Premier spoke very quickly against racism when we did see that happening in this province. We as a Legislature have spoken against racism and, in particular, as it had manifested during our response to COVID. I can say that, look, we listened to the medical advice that we've received from the chief medical officer of health in this province throughout the response to COVID, and we continue to listen to her advice . . .

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

### Cultural Activities

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is rich with diversity. Many people from across the world move to Alberta because of economic opportunities. This along with our indigenous and Canadian culture builds a foundation of cultural diversity in our province that is our strength. Diversity allows for openness to different cultures and ethnicities and leads to economic growth. To the minister of culture: how is our government using cultural resources to advance our economy and make life better for all Albertans?

2:40

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank this member for the incredible work that he does in culture alongside me along with many of the members on this side. We're so excited, actually, about the Culture Days grants and supports online for small-venue events. These will be held from September 1 to 30, and it will make it really easy for communities to connect safely while celebrating arts and culture. Communities can apply for a \$10,000 grant for their 2020 Alberta Culture Days events happening throughout September. Becoming an official Alberta Culture Days celebration site helps to build these partnerships, showcases local talent, and boosts impact and the reach of existing cultural programs.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's cultural heritage is unique in Canada and further given that conserving and celebrating our province's culture is important to many Albertans and we see people reeling about the economic and social loss of cultural events, to the same minister: what investments are being made that will promote Alberta's unique culture and contribute to our province's economic development?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we know and what we've seen through COVID is that music can very much bring us together as a community and lift our spirits. The province is actually providing in partnership to stream concerts as of June 11 – I hope many of the members in here have seen these – as a source of income for musicians and for the entertainment of Albertans. This initiative helps Alberta musicians who are struggling financially, obviously, because of the necessary health measures to fight this unprecedented global pandemic. We have performers like Celeigh Cardinal, who just won a Juno, Sinzere, Altameda, Nice Horse, and a very good friend of mine, Matt Blais.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is a popular destination for newcomers to Canada and further given that in addition to their significant contributions to our provincial economy newcomers also contribute to the cultural identity and social diversity, which is to the benefit of every single Albertan, to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that new Canadians have the opportunity to continue to celebrate their own religious and cultural events in Alberta post COVID-19?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank again many of the members in here and especially the Premier for really flinging the doors open of the Legislature, the Federal Building, and McDougall, really bringing people here. This is their home, and we want people to feel comfortable here. As we come out of COVID, what we did in the meantime is that we did a matching donations program, \$2 million, with eight designated Alberta-based registered charities between April 15 and May 31. Combined we were able to raise \$7 million for designated COVID-19 fundraising campaigns and donations. Many, actually, of our multicultural and small cultural communities were huge, huge donors to these causes and actually worked in conjunction with a lot of these organization to help out our communities, especially with our isolated seniors and others and new Canadians entering the country recently.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

#### Bill 31 Environmental Protection Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 31, the Environmental Protection Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

Our government is moving to clarify how minerals and pits are defined in provincial legislation and to provide clarity about how sand operations should be regulated in our province. If passed, Bill 31 will remove confusion for sand and gravel operators and clarify the appropriate environmental review as part of an effective regulatory process that has been in place in the province of Alberta since 2004.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 32 Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act.

This legislation will help us deliver on our government's promise to restore balance to Alberta's workplaces. Mr. Speaker, we began this process last fall with Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. We are continuing this commitment in Bill 32. If passed, Bill 32 will provide employees and employers with clearer and more transparent rules, promoting fairness and productivity, including, for example, changes to rules concerning temporary layoffs in the employment standards act and modification to rules for construction in the Labour Relations Code. This past fall our government consulted with Albertans, job creators, and other industry groups and unions. We repeatedly heard concerns about unnecessary administrative processes that are costing job creators millions of dollars per year when these dollars could be used to create many more jobs needed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that we restore workplace balance and democracy while supporting employees and job creators as we move through to economic recovery. Bill 32 is needed to support this recovery by reducing burdens on job creators and getting Albertans back to work while maintaining key protections. If passed, this legislation will help reduce red tape from daily operations and save Alberta employers an estimated hundred million dollars per year, keeping many more Albertans employed and businesses sustainable.

Now, many businesses are uncertain about their future as they grapple with the economic shutdown, and, Mr. Speaker, as our province and our country reopens, this legislation will provide greater clarity and stability to employers and employees and save job creators time and money and help further our province's economic recovery efforts and will help restore the balance in Alberta's workplaces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 33 Alberta Investment Attraction Act

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce Bill 33, Alberta Investment Attraction Act.

This bill will enable the creation of an investment attraction corporation that will attract job-creating private-sector investment from across Canada and around the world. The new corporation will pursue high-value and high-impact investment opportunities that will bring numerous economic benefits to Alberta. We know investment is one of the primary drivers of economic growth and job creation. New investments into the province will support the conditions for growth by creating jobs, increasing economic development, and expanding the competitiveness of our province's leading industries and subsectors.

The creation of the new investment attraction corporation is a key action identified in Alberta's blueprint for jobs, through our throne speech, and in Budget 2020 and will help the economy recover from

the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation to stand up a new investment attraction agency sends a clear signal to investors that Alberta is indeed open for business. Alberta must be able to compete with other jurisdictions as global economies reopen and to position itself as one of the best places in the world to do business and invest.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies that I will put on the tablings table after this. That is the Canadian Energy Centre's fact sheet 12 from July 2020, which I referred to in my member's statement earlier today, where it discusses measuring First Nation support or opposition to oil and gas in British Columbia and Alberta.

2:50

**Ms Renaud:** Mr. Speaker, I have six sets of tablings. These are letters from constituents on different subjects that I'll table. I'll put them in the basket afterwards. The first set is on privatizing some of the PDD disability supports that I've been talking about.

Another set is on the defunding work around antiracism.

Another set, the third set, is people who do home-schooling right now and are opposed to Bill 15.

The next set is about concerns related to Alberta Health and the UCP fights with doctors.

Lastly, this set is about opposition to the changes to Alberta parks.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This point of order is under 23(h), (i), and (j). It intends to create disorder in the House, imputes false and unavowed motives, et cetera. Now, I do recognize that my recollection – and I apologize; I do not have the Blues – is that the statement was that the NDP continue to make things up, which differed slightly from the point at which you intervened afterwards when the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar indicated something specifically about the minister.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that my point here is that obviously there were a number of instances in which I did not call such statements today. Obviously, I do not intend to relitigate those, but I think my point here is that there are only a certain number of times that one can let the same thing go. I am now in *Erskine May Parliamentary Practice*, 25th edition, section 21.21. This is on page 495. I'm sure the Speaker will be familiar. "The Speaker has said in this connection that whether a word should be regarded as unparliamentary depends on the context in which that word is used."

I appreciate that sometimes we make a distinction between saying "that member" versus saying "the NDP." In this case, however, the hon. minister clearly went on to quote extensively or to reference directly things that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was saying. Simply turning it from "the Member for Edmonton-

Gold Bar makes things up" to "the NDP makes things up" and then referencing specifically the comments and actions of one particular member I think should not get us out of the general rule with respect to calling people unparliamentary words such as "liar."

I think the issue here is that, I mean, he specifically referenced the comments by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I think, specifically, the comments that he was referencing were the comments about the lifting of regulation on open-pit mining in certain areas. Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear that the government did that. It's a clear area of government policy. It's a clear decision they made. It's in law. The law has now changed. It enables people to have open-pit mines in environmentally sensitive areas. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was absolutely correct that that was outlawed under Peter Lougheed a number of years ago. This is not one of their typical "We're reversing everything the NDP did" things. This is them reversing Conservatives who have gone before.

You know, he said that the members continue to make things up. I think my issue here, Mr. Speaker – and, again, I don't have the benefit of the Blues – is that this is a clear case of doing indirectly what one cannot do directly, which is to say clearly, and clearly to everyone listening, referencing a specific member and attempting to claim that that which is perfectly factual is a lie, and then trying to get away with it by saying "the NDP" rather than directly referencing the member.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that my concern here is that, you know, the point here in this place is to discuss the policy of the issue. The minister clearly has that policy. He's made the rule. It's in law. If he wishes to defend that or to attack the policy of the previous government, that is fine. But to attack the member who made the statement that he has that policy as a liar, I think, is inappropriate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no point of order here at all. To be clear, you've already ruled on this matter many times, but briefly, the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader indicates that I referred or referenced the member in the question. I don't have the Blues either. I do have a transcript. The Blues are usually better, to be fair. I know you will have them, but what I have here, as I said, Mr. Speaker:

The NDP continue their practice of making things up. It really is quite ridiculous.

Then I go on to say:

Environmental protection remains all across the eastern slopes. The Alberta Energy Regulator continues to regulate [the] coal mine, [it] has to go through the exact same process . . . in place inside this province for decades and follow every environmental rule.

Mr. Speaker, I go on to say:

What really is at the core of that member's question is that they are anti . . . development, anti . . . job creator, and will do everything that they can to continue their behaviour that they had when they were in government and drive investment out of this province. We'll protect our environment, and we'll put [our] people back to work [at the same time].

At no time do I reference the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar or in any way allude to his honesty inside this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, which the Deputy Opposition House Leader has referred to. He would go on to do so shortly thereafter, which you've already dealt with, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, I speak about the NDP in general at the beginning of that answer.

**The Speaker:** I can only imagine that there is no other requirement for interjections.

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. I would agree with the hon. Government House Leader that at no point in time did he make the accusation that that particular member was making things up. I would also concur that his transcript of the interactions is quite similar to what I have with the benefit of the Blues, where he does say, "Again, the NDP continue their practice of making things up." The only portion of the question that could be considered to be of personal nature is when he referred to the core of that member's question as antidemocratic, "anti . . . development, anti . . . job creator," and that they "continue their behaviour" from what they did "when they were in government and drive investment out of this province."

While I'm sympathetic to the position of the Deputy Opposition House Leader that these sort of broad-based statements about what individuals tied to a group may or may not do are unlikely to increase decorum, we have accepted as a general rule in this Assembly that we will tolerate those statements. I believe members of the Official Opposition make them on a very consistent basis about what the government may or may not do, and members of the government make these sort of groupings of statements about what groups of opposition members may or may not do. Now, if we come to a point where decorum has decreased to such a level that neither side will be able to continue to make those statements, that may happen in the future. But at this point in time I consider this not to be a point of order.

What I would also like to highlight: because of the second point of order that was called by the hon. the Government House Leader during debate today, in which I chose to intervene at the time, some outside of this place may argue that I've ruled one set of rules for the government and a different set of rules for the opposition. I want to provide some clarity on the difference between what happened in the first point of order and what happened in the second point of order, when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said, "Well, Mr. Speaker, given that I live in hope that one . . . day the minister will tell the truth in the House." Obviously, that's significantly different than saying that members of that government will tell the truth. Both perhaps not helpful, but it's very different when we've implied that only one individual, in this case the hon. the Government House Leader, wasn't telling the truth. As such, I made the decision to intervene on that point of order at that time. Those two points of order, while similar, are very different.

We are at point of order three as I consider both of those points of order dealt with and concluded. The hon. the Deputy Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I haven't the benefit of the Blues, but the point of order was, as I noted down at the time, on the words that those members "destroyed the community of Hanna." Again I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). I think my issue here is that, I mean, it's obviously superlative, but it's also clearly designed to create disorder in this place.

3:00

A short walk through the annals of history will demonstrate that under the former Conservative government, the government of which the current Premier was a member, certain coal mines were being phased out. Mr. Speaker, there was no plan for transition funding or for assistance to any of those individuals who were thereby affected by that particular policy. Under the policy of this former government, that added two additional mines to a list of, I think, six – I may be slightly off on those numbers. But I think the point is that they were provided with transition funding. They were

provided with training. They were provided with a number of things in order to support that transition.

So having the members opposite stand up and accuse us of a problem which was created initially by a government of which the Premier was a part is a little bit rich. To add to that the fact that we took active steps to ensure that those individuals were assisted in their transition, because we do care very deeply about people and about their livelihoods and about their ability to maintain their communities – I hear the Government House Leader laughing. I don't think this is a particularly funny matter.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the comment was clearly intended to create disorder. It's a blatant mischaracterization of what happened. Certainly, there are a number of mischaracterizations that occur in this place on any given day, but I think that the suggestion that people are destroying or intending to destroy communities is a bit over the top in this case, and I believe that the member should withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is, first of all, clearly a matter of debate. While I understand that the Deputy Opposition House Leader may be sensitive to their failed record when it comes to coal and may be sensitive about the impact of her former government's policies on communities like Hanna and elsewhere inside this province – I'll quote just from a December 9, 2019, article from the *Financial Post* when referring to the actions taken by the former NDP government in regard to Hanna. It says:

Westmoreland Coal Co., which runs the mine that feeds Sheerness with coal, entered bankruptcy protection in 2018. Housing prices collapsed to the point where detached three-bedroom homes . . . are being listed for as little as \$20,000. People fled town . . . the three-year stretch between 2016 and 2018 was "devastating" for the town [of Hanna].

That is the hon. member and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's record when it comes to coal. But at the end of the day, it's certainly a matter of debate inside this Chamber. The hon. member may see it a different way. She's welcome to debate within this Chamber, but this is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I also assume that there are no other submissions.

I am prepared to rule on the point of order. I think, given the evidence provided – the hon. Government House Leader and others provided additional facts about what may or may not have happened in the community of Hanna – that is evidence that we are continuing the debate on what happened in and around the community of Hanna. So I also consider this to be a matter of debate and not a point of order.

But I would provide the Government House Leader with some caution. When he says, "Let's not forget that member," implying that the individual member was the one that was responsible, although he did go on to talk about the government being responsible for single-handedly destroying Hanna, I would just provide some caution that this is the sort of thing that can continue to lead to disorder in the Chamber.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View rose on a fourth point of order as well.

### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This point of order was called with respect to the hon. Minister of Justice. In the instance

the words were that that member makes things up, the member in question in this case being me. The question that was read immediately before that made multiple allegations: that the Minister of Justice was involved in a UCP leadership race, that that race is now under investigation by the RCMP for voter fraud, that the Minister of Justice had at the time expressed concerns about that same process, that the Premier ultimately benefited from that process.

Mr. Speaker, I think the point here is that this is a clear attempt to create disorder. It is a clear allegation made against a member. In addition, it's not true, which I understand is not relevant. But all of those things which I have listed there – i.e., the Minister of Justice being involved in the leadership race, the RCMP investigation for voter fraud, the concerns that the Minister of Justice raised around voting in that same leadership race, the Premier's ultimately benefiting from it; oh, sorry: the question also referenced policy being driven from the Premier's office; I guess that one is arguable – were all true.

I think that the Minister of Justice rising and saying that that member makes things up, especially while getting up and saying: the NDP made a complaint about me to the Ethics Commissioner, which I've been cleared on – now, while I am deeply flattered that the Minister of Justice cannot tell the difference between our political party and Democracy Watch, it was not, in fact, the NDP that made that particular complaint. It was Democracy Watch.

Mr. Speaker, having the Minister of Justice get up, accuse me of making things up, which I think is unparliamentary in this instance, particularly when, as I've listed, it's not made up – the RCMP investigation is ongoing; it continues to be a thing – I think, is ridiculous, particularly while simultaneously accusing us of making allegations against him, again, a complaint which was filed by an independent agency, Democracy Watch, because they were so deeply concerned about the actions in, admittedly, an unrelated arena. This suggestion that somehow that links back to me making things up – again, I'm deeply flattered that the minister has confused me with Democracy Watch.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is clearly a violation of the rules and that the Minister of Justice ought to apologize for that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have the transcript or the benefit of the Blues on this one, so I'm not sure what the minister said. I'll have to refer to you, who have the Blues at the moment. I will be clear. I don't recall one true fact inside the statement in the question that was made by the Deputy Opposition House Leader, but I don't see how that's relevant to this question. I'll refer to you, Mr. Speaker, on what the minister said and will act accordingly based on what the Blues say, but I can't take it at face value given the points of order that we've already seen today and the fact that the transcripts that we had on the last points of order do not show what the Deputy Opposition House Leader says. I'll have to wait to see what they say.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I have the benefit of the Blues with respect to the comments that the Minister of Justice made immediately preceding the point of order being called. I will accept and acknowledge that it's possible in the previous answer, where I would have guessed that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View would have raised the point of order at that time if that is when those comments had been made.

But I will, with the benefit of the Blues, provide you what the hon. Minister of Justice did say. If, in fact, at a previous answer he said, "That member is making stuff up," I would agree that that is a

point of order, and he should withdraw and apologize. However, here is the benefit of the Blues that I have with respect to the answer that he made immediately prior to the point of order being called.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to quote something from the Ethics Commissioner: often with the media and particularly social media, the truth is inconvenient and the facts are of no interest at all. I think that that member's question demonstrates that [very] point . . . very clearly. You know what [is going on here]. We're going to get big money out of politics.

He goes on to make accusations about other people that aren't inside this Chamber, and I don't think that they bear repeating. But at no point in time does he say: that member is making that up. As such, there's no point of order.

3:10

I will review the previous answer, and if, in fact, he made that statement, I'll have someone apologize and withdraw on his behalf or, should he be in the Chamber, to do that.

### Privilege

#### Misleading the House

**The Speaker:** Now, hon. members, for the point you've all been waiting for. I am prepared . . . [interjection] The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika will come to order.

Hon. members, I'm prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on June 25, 2020, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and Deputy Official Opposition House Leader. The question relates to comments made by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on May 27, 2020, and by the Premier on June 22, 2020. The Deputy Official Opposition House Leader provided her question of privilege to my office at 11:18 on June 25, with a copy to the hon. Premier and the hon. Minister of Finance and the hon. Government House Leader and therefore met the notice requirements under Standing Order 15(2). I also find that this matter was raised at the earliest opportunity, as is a requirement.

In her arguments on June 25, 2020, at pages 1673 to 1675 of *Hansard* for that date, the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader alleged that on Friday, May 27, 2020, the hon. the Minister of Finance made deliberately misleading statements to the Assembly, that on June 22, 2020, similar statements were made by the hon. the Premier, and that the making of these statements constitutes a contempt for the Assembly.

The May 27 statements by the Minister of Finance are found on page 836 of *Hansard* for that day. These statements were made in response to a question posed by the hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West during debate on matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was held pursuant to Government Motion 19. The hon. the Minister of Finance in his response stated that the Auditor General was concerned that the office of the Auditor General would not be able to complete its audit work related to the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, before the June 30 deadline.

The June 22 statements made by the hon. Premier are found on page 1506 of *Hansard* for that day and were made during Oral Question Period in response to the questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition. In those remarks the hon. Premier stated that the Auditor General indicated that the office of the Auditor General was not capable of completing its audit work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In support of her argument that the statements made by the hon. Premier and the Minister of Finance were deliberately misleading, the deputy Official Opposition House Leader tabled correspondence between the Official Opposition caucus and the official of the office of the Auditor General, which was filed with

the Assembly as Sessional Paper 239/2020. In accordance, the office of the Auditor General clarified that it was the Controller's office that initiated the conversation about delaying the June year-end reporting requirements and that, to the Auditor General's knowledge, his office never stated any concern about their capacity to complete their financial statement audit work by June 30.

The official from the Auditor General's office also indicated that she contacted the Provincial Controller's office to clarify the comments that the hon. Minister of Finance made in the Assembly on May 27 and received confirmation from that office that the decision to extend the 2019-2020 year-end reporting period was a decision made by the government and not at the request of the office of the Auditor General. The Deputy Official Opposition House Leader alleged, on the basis of these facts, that the members who made the relevant statements deliberately misled the Assembly and therefore are in contempt of the Assembly.

Yesterday in response the Minister of Transportation and Deputy Government House Leader argued that neither member stated in the relevant statements that the Auditor General had approached the government seeking to delay the 2019-2020 reports. The Deputy Government House Leader further referenced public statements, posted on the Auditor General's website on March 19, 2020, that stated that the office of the Auditor General was assessing its ability to continue to fulfill its legislated mandate in light of the COVID-19 pandemic response. The Deputy Government House Leader's arguments are found on pages 1695, 1696 of *Hansard* for July 6, 2020.

As noted on June 25, 2019, on page 1174 of *Hansard* for that day, the test for deliberately misleading the House is a very difficult test to meet. This test is found in the fourth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand* at pages 775, 776. The test has three elements: the statement must in fact have been misleading, the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time in which the statement was made, and the member must have intended to mislead the House.

Based on the correspondence tabled by the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader, it appears reasonable to suggest that the office of the Auditor General would most likely consider the statements in question to be inaccurate although the Deputy Government House Leader argued the fact that the members' statements, in fact, do not expressly state that the office of the Auditor General approached the government. I find that the statements taken as a whole within their context could be reasonably interpreted as to imply the same, that it was the office of the Auditor General that advised the government that their office could not complete the work in question by the 30th.

Therefore, while it may be a reasonable conclusion to find that the first element of the test had been met, I then must move to consideration of the second element, and this is where I find the test has not been met. As I noted, the second element of the test requires that the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time that the statement was made. It is exceedingly difficult to prove a case of deliberately misleading the Assembly, and so it should be as this is a very serious allegation. Proving the second element is especially difficult in the case of the responses to oral questions, when ministers are expected to answer immediately the questions and only have a short period of time to provide the response. The Speaker is required to consider what the speaker meant or didn't mean in this short response.

In the absence of evidence that the Minister of Finance or the Premier had direct knowledge that the information contained in their statements was, in fact, inaccurate, I am unable to find that the second element of the test has been met in either case. Although there was evidence that the Provincial Controller's office was made

aware that the office of the Auditor General considered the comments to be inaccurate, in the case of the Minister of Finance's comments the correspondence of the office was sent after the statements were made in the Assembly. Furthermore, there was no indication that this information was brought to the attention of either the Minister of Finance or the Premier so as to possibly correct any misinformation that may have existed between the parties involved at the time.

Accordingly, as I find that the second element of this test is not met, I find that the alleged case against both members has not been made and therefore that no prima facie case of a question of privilege has arisen. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

3:20

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 26

#### Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020

[Adjourned debate July 6: Mr. Schow]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika adjourned debate. He has 15 minutes remaining, should he choose to use them.

**Mr. Schow:** Waived.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen to join in the debate.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to use the Member for Cardston-Siksika's 15 minutes as well. Just kidding. I'm happy to engage in this opportunity to discuss Bill 26 as proposed, which is currently titled the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. I want to say off the hop – and I think people have heard us say some of this publicly. This bill seems to clearly be drafted in a way to put big money back into Alberta politics, something that – I was really proud to be a part of the government whose first bill was to literally take out every corporate and union dollar from our democratic process in terms of donating to political parties. That was something that was a proud moment for me because I truly believe and I think that all members of our party believe that democracy belongs to the people and not to the biggest donors or the biggest lobbyists.

When we had an opportunity to bring in legislation to cap donations at far more reasonable rates – some would still say that I think it's about \$4,300 as of today is a lot, but it certainly was less than I think it was \$30,000 that we were at beforehand, so it was definitely a step in the right direction. But here we are today debating a bill proposed by the current government, the UCP government, that brings in \$500,000 for third-party advertising when it comes to questions being put to the public where only the Premier can determine what the question is. It definitely creates a very unbalanced playing field when it comes to ordinary citizens being able to determine the outcomes of democracy versus the Premier and big donors motivating people on the Premier's questions.

I also want to take a chance to recognize that we have some guests in the gallery who are representatives of the United Nurses of Alberta. Thank you so much for being here. It's great to have people back in the gallery. I love seeing people physically distanced, and I see you're also wearing your masks. Of course, as you are nurses, we appreciate all of the work that our front-line health care workers provide to the people of Alberta every day. I

of global pandemic. When we're outside clapping on Saturdays at 7, we're thinking about you and all of the other front-line workers that have kept us all safe over the last several months and, really, all of our lives. Thank you so much.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I imagine that nurses would love to be able to put forward a question on a referendum, maybe a question like: do you think it's fair for the government to cut a billion dollars from health care spending and then put half of it back in and say that that's sufficient to meet the needs of a pandemic? I think the answer would probably be, overwhelmingly, no. I highly doubt that the Premier is going to put that question forward to Albertans as the referendum question during debates.

Maybe he would, but if we want to say that we truly believe in having fair and open democratic processes, then we shouldn't limit the ability of the person who can drive the question, determine the wording of the question, and ask the question to one individual in the province. That definitely seems blatantly undemocratic and quite unfair. If there were other processes for other people to put forward questions, I would be more open to the idea. I actually think that there are times where referendums can be very helpful in determining the will of the people. But when the will of the people – when the only question being asked is by one person who has a desired political outcome, I think that is blatantly unfair.

Then, of course, the money piece. Allowing massive donations from corporations to drive people to consider the question from a certain angle or to only receive information about it positioned in a certain way, I think, again, is incredibly undemocratic and an affront to what – I would hope, when you're talking about legislation that governs elections and decisions, that you would want to drive more democracy, not less.

If the government were to consider an amendment where people other than the Premier, ideally all private members or maybe even a process that included Albertans in general, were able to put forward questions, I think that you would probably get a lot more enthusiasm. Maybe that's something that private members of this Assembly are considering. I certainly hope so. I know we're only in second reading, so now wouldn't be the time for those types of amendments to come forward, but let's plant that seed. I imagine that there are private members in this House who have ideas that they would like to see considered for a referendum, but that's not what this bill does. This bill channels it all through the Premier and the Premier alone.

Let me say that I know that probably folks realize, philosophically, that they won't always be in the positions that they're in today. Honestly, we won't. Not any single one of us will be in this same position in perpetuity, ever. I think I'm number 850. I don't know what number other members of this House are, but others will come after us. Do you trust that they should be the ones to determine these kinds of questions, to set these kinds of processes, and to drive these kinds of outcomes?

I think that there are a number of questions around the legitimacy of this proposal. That's why I am quite concerned by it. The big money piece obviously is one of the big drivers, but the other piece is having one person be able to determine what the question is, how it's asked, and when it's asked. I don't think that that actually reflects the will of the people. I know that the government likes to say: what's more democratic than letting people answer questions? I agree. Then why is it that the only question to be asked will be determined by the Premier at the timing of the choosing of the Premier, with the question that the Premier chooses, and with such

big donation amounts allowed to influence the outcome of the determination of the question?

I think that these are fair things to be asking of the government. The title says that this is about constitutional referendums, but I think that this is about something much more underhanded, in my honest opinion. I think this is about trying to create an unbalanced and unfair playing field for folks to engage in democracy.

Some amendments that might want to be considered are things like: should there be any spending on third-party advertising in these types of decisions that are coming forward? If they are, should they be individuals or should they be corporations that are driving the spending? The way it's written right now, it definitely puts unfair, unequal balance towards large, big-pocket corporations.

The other piece I want to say is that I really wish that we were in this place debating legislation around democracy in areas where we have seen significant, at best questionable decisions made and at worst fraud, forgery, bribery, and an underhanded campaign that resulted in the leadership of the now Premier, who's going to determine the questions that will be going forward by referendum if this bill does pass.

When I reflect on the last two years, specifically on the fact that there was a kamikaze candidate that quite openly, after, of course, all the documents got leaked, talked about the fact that they were working collaboratively the whole time to make sure that speeches were written by the preferred candidate, the now Premier, that they were given to the individual for design things as well as literally the words that were recommended for that person to be saying during the campaign to attack the hon. Brian Jean, who – the other thing that I found really interesting is that the now Minister of Finance, then leadership candidate, talked about how this was standard practice, that opponents share with each other their strategies, their dates that they are planning on withdrawing from a campaign. Never has that happened to me.

I did have some opponents before withdraw, but they didn't ever tell me: I'm going to do it on this day and this time, and this is how you should probably respond to that. They definitely didn't give me their strategies, their speaking notes, or their campaign materials. Sometimes they'd end up in my mailbox, but they definitely didn't send them to me as a: hey, I'm planning on doing this; maybe you should say this instead. That is definitely not standard practice in the many elections I've had the honour of being a part of both as a candidate, as a worker, and as a volunteer. That definitely wasn't part of typical campaign strategy.

3:30

For folks to be drafting legislation around elections who think that that's appropriate – I doubt they actually think it's typical, because I think they have more experience than those quotes would give us credit for as people who are responding to them. To say that it's appropriate for there to be these types of very underhanded, unbalanced campaigns happening in a way that – the other piece that happened through the kamikaze campaigns, too, of course, was these donations being funnelled there, donations given to the now leader of the UCP, the Premier, and donations given to attack the kamikaze candidate. So there was this completely unbalanced weighting of donations because they were finding ways to try to work around what, they argued, were the existing loopholes. But are they coming here today to close those loopholes? No. They're driving bigger trucks through other pieces of legislation to create even more opportunities for people to buy elections and for there to be unbalanced and unfair influence.

Then, of course, there were questions around how people were sold memberships. Were people sold memberships in a way that they consented to, where they actually made the choice to buy that

membership, or were there questions around them being done legitimately? I believe the Election Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner as well as branches of law enforcement have been called in to investigate fraud, forgery, and bribery as it relates to people being forced to buy memberships. Those specific articles, I recall, were around credit cards being used without their consent. Those are very, very serious allegations, and I would hope that this government and any government would take them seriously and would act in a way to strengthen and limit the types of concerns around our democratic process and how it has been misused, potentially, in the past.

I think that those are the types of bills where people would say: "You know what? They are actually working to improve democracy. They're working to find a way to take big money out, to make sure that it doesn't just go to the highest bidder and that it also doesn't just go to somebody who may or may not have sold those memberships ethically and in accordance with the existing laws." I think that would be a bill to actually strengthen and improve democracy. Those bills would be great.

Instead, what we've seen is the current government choosing to fire the Election Commissioner in the midst of an investigation in a totally unprecedented way, through legislation being rammed through while the person under consideration, the leader of the party, wasn't even here to weigh in on the debate. He happened to be out of the country for the duration that the government forced the bill through, came back and continues to bring forward more pieces of legislation that, I believe, fulfill the desire to undermine democracy, not build, strengthen, or restore questions that have certainly arisen over the last three years while we've been seeing the lack of respect for the rule of law by certain leadership candidates and interim leaders.

I have a lot of concern about how this has been handled over the last three years and how we are going to now trust the person who was under investigation by the Election Commissioner, who then fired the commissioner, to then determine the question, determine how the question is asked, determine where it's asked, determine the wording that's asked, and to allow for third-party advertisers to drive people to a certain outcome. I find that incredibly disrespectful to democracy, to the role that each and every one of us plays in upholding justice and why it was that each of us was elected to come to this place to fight for ordinary people and our rights.

That's why I'm here, because a lot of individual folks decided to cast a ballot that supported my leader and myself in coming to this place and fighting for them, and that is certainly what I expect out of every piece of legislation that comes forward, that there be some angle of how it's actually going to help the individuals who collectively sent us here, not how it's going to drive big money and one specific person's desires to ask questions in an attempt to validate his own political will or desires.

For those reasons, I am deeply concerned by this bill at this stage of debate. Again, it's titled Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. I think that there are a lot of other ways that we could strengthen democracy instead of trying to bring truckloads of cash into questions that are driven by the Premier and only the Premier.

Perhaps there are private members who are thinking of amendments. I'm confident that there are on our side of the House, and I think it would be great to see private members come up with amendments to support that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to speak? Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was absolutely fascinated listening to the words of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I think she's raised some really, really important points in terms of this bill sort of opening the door to let big money into politics. Also, I think that we all know, when you look at research out there and when you look at studies that are published, that who asks the question and how they ask it are relevant to what answer they get. I think that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora raised some incredibly important points around the fact that only the Premier and cabinet are permitted to determine what the questions are. This is supposedly a move towards democracy, but it's a move towards only certain people being permitted to ask certain questions at certain times.

I was very interested in what the member had to say in that respect, and I would be very much interested to hear her expound further on the reasons why this really doesn't strengthen democracy, at the end of the day, because, again, it puts the power in the hands of the very few to decide which questions are asked. Then, after those questions are asked, it allows each individual, so each one of us in here – there are 87. Okay; probably not us. But each one of us has a friend to raise an enormous amount of money to campaign on that particular issue: I think that that's a concern. I myself was certainly proud to act, when I was in government, to remove big money from politics, and I think that seeing this door opening is a big concern for me.

With that, I will ask the Member for Edmonton-Glenora to continue.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Definitely, one of the pieces that was sparked in my memory by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View – I thank her for her engagement in this debate in this way; I really appreciate it – was the questions around disclosure of donations. There were questions around whether or not leadership candidates would disclose their donors when running for political office, and we definitely brought in that requirement. But the now Premier decided to not disclose, and at the time it technically wasn't a requirement, but I'm confident that he told people that he was going to disclose who his donors were. We have yet to see who donated to his leadership campaign.

There's an ability for there to be less disclosure in this bill as well with the third-party advertising because expenses don't have to be filed as an audited financial statement until they reach \$350,000. If I were somebody donating to one of these campaigns, I think that Albertans would deserve to know that I was one of the people that was bankrolling it, for them to figure out what my motivation was and for them to be able to know, before they cast their decision, how biased or unbiased that opinion might be. I think that would be fair and reasonable.

Also, if I was a donor, I think that having an audited financial statement to ensure that the money I donated actually went towards what I was told it was going to be spent on would be the most simple expectation that anyone has. When I donate to charities or to political parties, I know that they have a proper accounting process and that the spending will be accounted for, and therefore I should have confidence in what I'm donating to. Again, the fact that there doesn't have to be an audited financial statement until the \$350,000 benchmark is reached I think is really disrespectful to democracy as well as to the people or businesses who may or may not be donating.

3:40

I do understand that the individual contributions have been capped. I'm not sure if it's at \$4,000 or the indexed \$4,000, which

might be closer to \$4,300, but I guess that's better than a limitless amount for any individual to be able to donate. But, again, spending up to half a million dollars per referendum to try to sway public opinion per third-party advertiser – there could be multiple third-party advertisers as well – I think is really funnelling tons of not just big money but, clearly, what could be dark money because of the \$350,000 requirement. There could be a whole bunch of \$349,000 campaigns happening, and the public would have no idea where that money came from, how it was being used, or how it was being accounted for.

These are serious affronts to our democracy, and I urge us to reconsider.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 26 in second reading? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to get up and speak to this bill. Of course, that's Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. There's so much to say about this particular bill and on the debate that's actually come before this House already.

You know, I had the pleasure of being here last night until quite late into the evening as we were discussing this particular bill, and one of the things that really, really impacted me was when members of the government, the private members of the governing party, got up to speak on this bill. They accused the Official Opposition of being elitist, that somehow we don't trust the Alberta public to be able to vote on a constitution. But, of course, they were missing the arguments that we were trying to make, as so many times they do when we're in the House debating these particular issues. I mean, I understand. It's an issue of, you know, adding a little bit of drama to the work that we do here and perhaps even trying to make it a little bit more jovial. I understand these things, but I think it's very important that we stress that these are very, very serious issues. Very, very serious issues.

As was highlighted by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, our primary concern with this particular bill is that the Premier will be the one deciding what the questions are. How is this democratic? Now, the Member for Banff-Kananaskis got up in debate last night and actually accused us of somehow supporting dictatorship. I don't know. Having one person decide what a question will be in a referendum: that, to me, sounds like a dictatorship.

**Ms Glasgo:** That thousands of people will vote on? That's democracy.

**Member Loyola:** But one person deciding what the question will be? Why don't we democratically in this House have an opportunity?

See, this is the true question: why does this government not want to allow the Official Opposition an opportunity to even decide what the question will be? I'll tell you why, Madam Speaker. Because this government time and time and time and time again continues to put more and more and more power into the hands of ministers and into the hands of this very Premier. Now, with, I would say, the majority of the pieces of legislation that have come before this House, we see this time and time again.

Now, I'm going to address specifically agencies, boards, and commissions. While we were in government, while the Alberta NDP was in government, we made a conscious effort not only to put more power and decision-making power in the hands of agencies, boards, and commissions, but we actually tried to make those agencies, boards, and commissions reflect the true makeup of the Alberta public, making sure that they were balanced, making sure that there were just as many women as there were men on these

agencies, boards, and commissions, making sure that there was more representation from cultural communities that actually call Alberta home. This is the truth of the matter.

Now, what this government is doing is that they've actually – for them it doesn't matter. Having any kind of gender equity on these agencies, boards, and commissions does not matter absolutely to them. We've seen that by the appointments that they've been making to these agencies, boards, and commissions, the ones that they are allowing to continue to exist, of course, Madam Speaker. We're seeing that time and time again, and the most recent one is with – help me out here. Is it the victims of crime?

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah.

**Member Loyola:** The victims of crime. They've just completely got rid of this agency, board, or commission. They just completely got rid of it. Now there's not going to be this opportunity for people from the Alberta public to actually participate in the democratic decision-making within that particular aspect of the law. We're seeing this time and time again with this government. How can they bold-facedly get up inside this House and accuse us of being undemocratic when the tendency that we are seeing by this government is actually them concentrating more and more power in the hands of ministers?

With this particular bill that we see in front of us, Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, it would be the Premier himself deciding what the question will be. That to me is not democratic. When we have 24 members of an Official Opposition that also constitute this very House and we also have the members from the other side as well, how come not all the members of this House will be able to decide what that referendum question will be? Why not?

This is what we need to address. Not only that, but I will continue to stress the fact that agencies, boards, and commissions are the way that we put more democratic decision-making power into the hands of the Alberta public, and that's exactly what those members on the other side of the House are actually taking away from the Alberta public. They are systematically taking power away from Albertans by reducing the number of agencies, boards, and commissions and then not only that; taking that very power that was actually held by these citizens and putting it into the hands of the minister instead. This is the reality of what we're experiencing in just a little over a year of this UCP government. So don't get up and bold-facedly say that we are being undemocratic. The truth hurts, doesn't it? [interjections] I'm glad that you find that funny because, of course, democracy is super funny, isn't it? Right? Taking power away from Albertans is funny to you.

Now, the other side of this, as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora so eloquently stated, is the fact that this very Premier, the individual that will be deciding what question will come forward in a referendum, has had investigations by the RCMP in terms of the leadership race that actually took place in order to constitute this brand new United Conservative Party. There was a kamikaze candidate. He even stated that he would disclose the donations to his leadership campaign, and he still has not done that. He still has not disclosed the amount that the people donated to that leadership campaign. I ask you, Madam Speaker: why not? Albertans want to know as well: why not? What is this Premier trying to hide? If he wasn't trying to hide anything, he would have already disclosed who donated to that campaign.

3:50

**Mr. Nally:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister for natural gas.

### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you very much. In terms of Standing Order 23(b), speaking to something other than what's up for discussion. If he could talk about Bill 26, that would be fantastic.

**Mr. Schow:** Not party matters.

**Mr. Nally:** Yeah. Not party matters.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, I suspect that you are already aware of the things that I'm about to say, but for the sake of the record and the sake of the members opposite, who seem a bit confused, I will outline again that not only does the latitude tend to be broad in these things, but the member was quite clearly speaking about the bill. He was speaking specifically about the fact that this bill brings in referendums and that the question is decided exclusively by the Premier and cabinet under secrecy. In fact, that's outlined right here in the act. Section 4: "The following is added after section 5... 5.1(1) If the Lieutenant Governor in Council", that's cabinet, "considers that an expression of public opinion [is necessary]," and then it goes on to talk about the powers that cabinet has to dictate which question is added, where in Alberta the question will be asked, whether or not it will be binding. I mean, that limitation of power and that centralizing of power is exactly what the member is referencing, the fact that that can be used in an improper way.

In addition, this bill brings in the ability for individuals to run campaigns with respect to a referendum and to fund raise up to half a million dollars. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I consider half a million dollars to be a reasonably significant amount of money.

I think it's pretty clear that the member was speaking to this bill. It's pretty clear that we've seen this government abuse dark money, so it's obviously related. You know, I think the member is totally off base here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, as we debate this bill in second reading, I will allow and have allowed a significant amount of latitude, and I will continue to allow that latitude. However, I will express some caution. If debate excessively goes on about other matters that may even be loosely related to the debate, you will be redirected toward the matters which are in this bill.

This is a matter of debate, and I will ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to continue.

### Debate Continued

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to wrap up because I understand that, you know, it hurts the members from the other side to have to hear these arguments over and over and over again about their Premier and the fact that, in my personal opinion, an individual who has done and is being investigated for these things just cannot be trusted. That's my personal opinion, and if it was anybody else, I would be expressing the same argument. Before I leave this topic, it's really important to me that I stress that the whole leadership campaign was plagued by fraud, forgery, and bribery.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'm really hoping that this government is going to be open, especially during Committee of the Whole on this particular bill, to amendments. As you may recall, I believe we served on that committee together, the Select Special Ethics and

Accountability Committee, if I'm not mistaken. We were actually delving specifically into how we strengthen democracy in this province. Now, I would think that if we really want to make sure that the Alberta public has an opportunity to express what they believe or how we should move forward as a government, how we should move forward as a province, then the question that is put before them should not necessarily just come from the Premier. If this government and this cabinet don't want all of us deciding on it, then perhaps it should be sent to a committee. It should be sent to a committee where that committee could then decide on the wording or the particular aspects of what the Alberta public would then have to decide upon. This would be democratic. This would be truly democratic. I challenge the members on the other side. I challenge you all to support this idea because that would truly be democratic, not leaving it in the hands of one particular individual.

You want to stand up and talk about democracy and how we're going to strengthen it in this province? Then put more power into the hands of committees. Put more power into the hands of agencies, boards, and commissions, where people of this fine province are going to be actually participating in the decision-making process. That's democracy. That's what I'm about and what I'm going to continue fighting about in this province as long as the constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie continue to elect me to represent them in this House because that is what they deserve. They deserve representatives that are going to put more power in their hands because that is what democracy is really about, not us making all the decisions.

I agree with the Member for Peace River. He got up and repeatedly said: yes, we want to put more power in the hands of the people of Alberta. If that's truly the case, then stop removing the power from agencies, boards, and commissions and putting it in the hands of ministers. Stop it. You can't get up on one subject and say, "This way" and then get up on another subject and say, "No; that way." Be consistent. Be consistent in the way that we approach democracy, and be consistent in the way that we want to put power in the hands of Albertans.

Now, the other aspect of this bill, of course, is the actual financial contributions, the more than \$350,000 that will be able to be put into, you know, these potential third-party advertisers that will then be able to influence the debate on a broad scale within the province when it comes to an actual referendum question. I mean, for me, what's really the problem here is that we don't know who those individuals are going to be that are going to be putting the money into these third-party advertising campaigns that would then potentially sway voters to vote in a particular way. We're not going to know who they are. We're not going to know how much money they put into it.

The work of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, while we were in government, specifically addressed this issue. When it came to financial contributions in any particular way to the democratic process, it was about creating more transparency rather than less transparency. This bill that we see before us is creating less transparency rather than more, so focus on that when you get up to debate rather than the rhetoric that we're being elitist.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a). I'd like to introduce something to the members opposite. It's called an Order Paper. Amongst other things it lists the bills and the motions that we can discuss on a daily basis. On this Order Paper there are two bills in particular, the one

which we're discussing at the moment, Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, and Bill 27, the Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act. Further to that point, we've also talked a lot in this session and even in the last session about a citizens-initiated referendum and recall.

You could almost say that there's a reoccurring theme of 2020 outside of all the other madness happening outside the Chamber with things like coronavirus, et cetera, which is improving democracy and voter engagement.

4:00

Now, I can understand why the members opposite are so opposed to this bill for two reasons. One, they didn't think about it themselves back when they were in government for four years. I don't think there were too many good ideas that came out of that side of the House when they were elected.

**Ms Hoffman:** Reducing child poverty and funding health care and education.

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. I didn't say all of them were bad. I hear them heckling, Madam Speaker. I hear them heckling now. I hear them heckling even when I watch these proceedings on television during question period, during the debate. I hear the heckling all the time. In fact, it's so loud that people can hear it on TV, and they can hear how ridiculous the opposition actually sounds. While we're trying to have a civil debate in this Chamber, the members opposite just can't fight the urge to say something ridiculous. You know, I have to say that members opposite might want to listen to what some of the members on the government side are saying with regard to improving democracy because that is what the members on this side of the House are actually trying to do.

But again, why are they mad? Why are they so mad, Madam Speaker? I think it goes back to that, one, they didn't have the idea themselves, and two, they don't trust Albertans. Now, the member who just spoke from Edmonton-Ellerslie said that the truth hurts. Sure. The truth hurts. They're feeling it on a daily basis when in the Chamber, that Albertans rejected them in record numbers. They would hate the idea of putting a question to the public that they may not like. But imagine for a moment. Let's just take a minute and imagine that question, and the public doesn't like it. What do they get to do? Vote against it. They get to vote against it or vote for it. But the decision is in their hands.

I heard a lot, both in the speech just now about what Albertans want from the member opposite from Edmonton-Ellerslie and from members in my constituency, at the doors, when I would knock on their doors and ask them for their opinion, what they want in government. They want one that's listening to Albertans. I would agree. There's a little bit of consensus between both of us.

But if I went and put this bill, if I went door to door right now and asked about this bill and asked them, "Do you think referendums are a good idea on important matters like bringing CPP back to Alberta and having an Alberta pension plan?" I'm willing to bet that the good people of Cardston-Siksika, that sent me here with over 70 per cent of the vote, would say in overwhelming numbers: yes.

How is direct democracy a bad thing? It's a very simple question. I mean, even something like the Senate Election Act: I don't know a single Albertan that would suggest that having an elected Senate is a bad thing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh, come on. Not one?

**Mr. Schow:** Maybe there is. I would love to hear the argument behind why having an elected Senate is not a good thing to do, but

we're not debating Bill 27. It is on the Order Paper, so if members opposite want to pick that up on the Order Paper and have a look at it, it's a wonderful piece of information. It's on your desk every day. It's put there for you conveniently.

I don't want to go on too much longer because I'm sure my time is about to expire, but I will simply say that it would be nice if the members opposite would actually look at this piece of legislation and realize what this government is trying to do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** For a minute there I thought that clapping was for me standing up.

Hon. members, we are currently debating Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. We are in second reading. I will recognize the hon. Member for St. Albert to speak.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 26, Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. That was highly entertaining, difficult to follow. But in any event, let's talk about this piece of legislation.

Now, I know that the government members want to frame this as: "Oh, my goodness. NDP are against democracy, and they oppose referendums." I think you're missing the point or maybe you're not listening or maybe you don't actually want to hear the answer. The answer is that we're not fundamentally opposed to referendums. What they are essentially is asking an electorate a question, a fair question, a question that isn't decided by one person, a question that isn't decided in secret, but a fair question to the electorate. We've done it in Canada a number of times on some important issues, and provinces all across the country have done it for a number of different things. Important questions have been asked that way.

No, we are not opposed to a referendum. We are opposed to what this is doing. I think my colleagues have done a really good job of talking about what this piece of legislation does. I think we've seen this pattern in the short time that this government has been in power, talking about their great big mandate to do whatever they want. What we have seen is that they will introduce a piece of legislation with maybe a title that makes a lot of sense or seems quite innocent or with a goal – the piece of legislation will do this thing – but when you look in the details, what it does is create a lot of loopholes, and it creates a lot of imbalance in our democracy. I think you heard the member referring to that.

Then to hear the members stand up and say: you know, why would the opposition always stand up and criticize and ask these questions? Well, let me just give you a little reminder. Governments that are not corrupt don't fire people investigating them. It's simple. The other thing is that this is a government that was named by four journalist associations as the most secretive government in Canada recently, in 2020. That's a fact. That's what we know. We also know this is a government that likes to do things and say they're doing something else. We see it regularly, all the time. We'll say: "Why did you cut AISH?" "We didn't cut AISH; we just deindexed it." "Why did you remove this?" "We didn't; we just streamlined it. We're transforming. We're serving more people." So there's this disconnect between what's actually happened.

Madam Speaker, we look at this piece of legislation, and we say that fundamentally we do not disagree with the premise of a referendum in any way when a fair question is asked to the electorate, but this is not the case. What this is doing is putting an incredible amount of power, it's concentrating power with this government, with the people at the top of this government, and it is introducing loopholes that will introduce dark money.

You know, I think back to 2015 and one of the things that I was so proud to be a part of. At the time I remember the members that were with the Wildrose Party also stood with us, and we

unanimously supported legislation that did a lot to change the way elections happened in Alberta. We used to be called, people referred to us as the Wild West in terms of the democracy here, in terms of the way that people could donate or get elected. The financing caps were huge. I think it was like \$30,000 that a person could donate . . .

**Mr. Eggen:** Per person.

**Ms Renaud:** . . . per person, which was incredible. So it was less about each person having one vote, but it was about big money, who had the most money and who could fund people with the most money. Those were the people that were elected again and again and again. We had four decades of Conservative governments – four decades of Conservative governments – and we were known as the Wild West in terms of election financing. What this particular piece of legislation does is open those doors once again in backwards ways.

4:10

Not only that, but I would suggest and I would also add that we've heard from the AUMA. We've heard about their feelings about what this has the potential to do for local municipal elections, for elections of councillors, of reeves, of mayors, of trustees, of school board trustees. You have to ask yourself the question: if the government is indeed all about democracy and transparency and making this all fair, why would you not listen to the people who are closest to those elections – the reeves, the mayors, the councillors, the trustees – who are saying: "Here is our concern. Here's what we're worried about. We're worried that you're introducing other issues into local politics, into local elections. We're worried that you're introducing dark money, money that we can't really track, whether it's through third-party advertising and we don't know where it's coming from, and you're introducing these things into local municipal elections"? Now, don't get me wrong. I don't think that local elections are without influence right now, but this will make it far worse if this piece of legislation passes.

This is clearly – this is clearly – an attempt to muddy the waters, I believe, in local elections and also to introduce mechanisms to bring more money into these elections. We know bills 26 and 27 will allow hundreds of thousands of dollars to be raised and spent to influence public opinion on political matters, with limited oversight and transparency and only with the Premier's permission. You know, it begs the question: who influences this Premier? Well, certainly his cabinet, certainly his donors. We don't know who all of his donors were way back when there was a PC leadership race, but that's irrelevant for this particular discussion. Who else influences the decision-making of this Premier? It's about money frequently. It could be, sometimes, racist speech writers. I don't know. But this is not a good piece of legislation if the goal is to increase transparency and democracy in this province.

Here are a couple of things that I think are fairly problematic. Once the Premier sets the rules in the way that he wishes – and I'm talking about a referendum – these groups can raise as much as half a million and spend as much as \$350,000 without having to tell Albertans what they're spending their money on. That is the very definition of dark money. This, again, is not about strengthening democracy. This is about the Premier giving himself the power to create a big-money machine that will allow more rich donors to write cheques, to make donations from the shadows. That is what this is.

Now, I think, you know, sometimes it's important to look at history. You can get a good sense of where we're going by looking at the history. I think if you look at the history of the United Conservative Party, obviously there were enough concerns for the

independent Election Commissioner at the time. This was an independent officer that was tasked with looking at the elections, election financing, donations, all of these things, and this independent officer found that there were problems. There were all kinds of allegations that were made. There were all kinds of fines that were levied, and these were not done lightly. It seems to me that there was a referral to the RCMP. That's pretty serious.

Yet this piece of legislation does absolutely nothing to tighten up the problems that we've seen. In fact, this just goes a step further to hide who is influencing outcomes. If indeed this is about referendums, pure and simple, then why is it that the government is introducing all of these other loopholes? Why is it that we cannot just ask Albertans a simple question? If it is a referendum question, why can't we ask them a very basic, simple question without introducing more money, more dark advertising, unknowns? Why would you muddy the waters and reduce the transparency around a referendum if indeed this is simply about asking Albertans a simple question? "Do you agree with this? Yes or no? Do you want this? Yes or no?" Why is it now that this government thinks that we are unable to ask Albertans a simple question without introducing hundreds of thousands more dollars to that question, to that event? That tells me, once again, that this is a piece of legislation that says one thing and does another.

I would like to know who precisely this government consulted when drafting, crafting, and before introducing this legislation. I think that we're all clear. We know the MO of this government in terms of consultation is that you cut, and you ask questions later. You jam the legislation through. You ask questions later, and then you say you're consulting. We know that that's not what consultation looks like. We know that that's not what real consultation looks like, asking a question when you already know the answer that you want.

Well, who did you really consult with? Is this what Albertans told you that they wanted you to spend time on, to create new ways for big money to find its way into provincial politics, into referendums? I don't think the answer would be yes. I think that right now Albertans have a very clear idea of the enormous challenges ahead of us, some of which were created because of a global pandemic, some created by the crash of commodity prices, some of which have been with us for a while, that we've ignored, that are related to climate change. We have gender inequality, we have poverty that grows monthly, we have unemployment, yet this is what the government is focusing on: bringing back big money into provincial politics.

Why is that? Well, I certainly have some theories, and I think my colleagues touched on that. It seems to me that this government is doing everything that they can to twist things and manipulate systems so that they can influence future outcomes of decisions, whether that's stacking agencies, boards, and commissions, whether that's changing legislation and concentrating power with a very small group, or now introducing more dark money to muddy the waters to reduce the amount of transparency in referendums and now in elections. That is incredibly disappointing.

I just want to point out for the record that in conjunction with Bill 27 – if you were to add up the money with Bill 26 and Bill 27, a third-party advertiser can now have three separate accounts. If this legislation passes, they can have three separate accounts, depending on how items are held together. Imagine that going into an election, if these things coincide in terms of timing, you have \$30,000 for a Senate election, \$150,000 for a general election, and \$500,000 for a referendum. That's big money. That's an increase of money.

When you consistently increase the amount of money that people can contribute towards elections or referendums, in this case where people are asked simple questions, you're not really allowing each person to have one vote and one voice to say: I agree with this; I

disagree with this. We all know, especially those of us in this place, of the power of advertising, let's say. We all know how much money buys in terms of an election, whether it's Facebook advertising or television or radio or billboards. We know these things, and we know how problematic it can be.

Going back, I was very proud to be part of a government – the other members that are still here voted for that legislation, Bill 1 – that removed corporate and union donors. We limited the donations that could be made to campaigns. We lowered it to \$4,000. We made some really strict rules so that elections would be about ideas and not about money. We also argued at that time – as we sat through that Special Ethics and Accountability Committee and did that work, we talked about the importance of levelling the playing field for all Albertans.

There's a reason why this place, this Chamber, doesn't exactly represent the reality of Alberta: the percentage of women that are here, the percentage of people of colour, and in terms of age. I don't believe that we have anybody here that has a disability. This place does not represent Albertans. As we did the work that we did with special ethics and accountability, we talked about: what is it that we can do with election financing and the rules around elections to level the playing field? It comes down very frequently, Madam Speaker, about money and about making this place accessible to all people. Once again, here is a move backwards, which is really unfortunate because I think during the four years we were going forward.

4:20

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to just perhaps ask the hon. Member for St. Albert about a couple of things she brought up, a couple of things I never even really thought of as concisely and as clearly that you did articulate just right now, the first one being, of course, that the principle of referendums – I've been looking at this a bit because I was here last night debating the same bill – does exist within the Westminster parliamentary system, of which this Legislature is governed as well. I don't think there's any dispute about either the legality of having referendums in this Legislature in this jurisdiction in a Westminster system or the utility of having referendums, too. From time to time we see them being used in other jurisdictions. We've seen them, you know, used in Canada from time to time. It is part of our political process, and it's part of our history that we share, both as a nation and as part of the Westminster system, right?

There's a big line here that I'm starting to see, though – it's more like a chasm, really, I think – and that is how this bill and Bill 27, which we will be moving to shortly, changes the rules around how a referendum is rolled out or how a senate election is rolled out, and these rules are directly in contravention or clashing with the limits on electoral spending that we brought into the Legislature here in the last four or five years, right? I think that your point that really struck me, woke me up a little bit was the fact that, of course, the opposition voted with us – so it was a unanimous vote – to clean up electoral financing here in the province of Alberta just a few short years ago.

The biggest thing to clean that up was to make sure that you take the big money out of politics. You don't allow the \$32,000 per individual donation per annum. You don't allow the multimillion-dollar corporate donations or union donations and so forth, right? You know, it helps to democratize things, quite frankly. The members opposite, for all of their rather hysterical proclamations from last night, especially around democracy and all this kind of

stuff – well, that's exactly what we had in place, which included referendums, right? All of those things were in place, and the difference on this bill – and I would like the member to correct me and to help me with this – is that, number one, it reintroduces big money that's not being accounted for, \$350,000, I believe, something like that, without proper accounting, and it also allows the Premier's office to control the language in which the referendums get to be done.

We know that we can look at not just the Westminster system; we can look at the American system that has, you know, lots of referendums and voting on initiatives, they call them, I believe, and so forth. They have a well-established process by which this is done in a democratic way. It's done in an equal sort of way, and it has a due process. It's not just up to the whim of a governor or a president or so forth; they go through a system that has been developed over time.

I don't see that. Maybe I'm missing something in this Bill 26 – right? – but I don't see that in here. I see the Premier's office being able to determine what is a referendum, what's not a referendum, what the language of that referendum is going to be, and so on and so forth.

I'll sit down because I know that I'm going on here, but I'd be curious to know if you could tell me a bit more about those two things.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In 20 seconds or less the hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** I don't have a whole lot to add in 20 seconds or less. Did you say 20 seconds?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yeah.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. I'll just say that, yes, I am also worried that power will be concentrated once again in the Premier's office behind closed doors. Dark money will become the norm. That's about it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak to the bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm actually tremendously excited to rise today and speak to this bill because I think this is a long time overdue in Alberta. To be frank, I think this is amazing legislation. I mean, I think a lot of my speech may be addressing some of what we've heard from the members across the aisle, but I suppose I'll open by quoting I believe it was the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. "The truth hurts." You know that the truth hurts when the pang of it stays long enough that you feel the need to keep addressing it. I suppose when I may have alluded or suggested that the members opposite, last night, actually, around midnight, did not support democracy and may, in fact, support dictatorships, it stung enough that they've now waited about 12 or 18 hours and felt the need to bring it up again. So I guess the truth does hurt, and it can sting a little bit, and I can tell that maybe it's under their skin.

You know, when we hear the members from last night make statements like referendums – I believe this is on the *Hansard* record somewhere. I don't have the Blues with me but something along the lines of: referendums take away the authority of duly elected officials. I mean, sure, they technically do, but that's just strengthening democracy because it's taking the decision out of the hands of 87 and putting it in the hands of 4.2 million. I mean, anything less than that, truthfully, is – if we don't support that premise, maybe we are getting along some dangerous lines in our

democracy. I suppose the truth does hurt, but I will stand by the claim that I made last night, and I believe most members of this House will.

I also want to put it on the *Hansard* record one more time – I put it on there last night, I'll put it on there again today, and, heck, maybe I'll even put it on there another time this week and table it at some time. For the record the Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition of democracy is supreme power vested in the hands of the people. Supreme power vested in the hands of the people. I can't think of a better way to do that than by letting 4.2 million people vote on specific policies and actions for the future of our province rather than vesting all of that weight in the decisions of the 87 of us in this Chamber. I just want to put that on the record to frame my argument that this is democracy in action.

This legislation enabling referendums in Alberta is one person, one vote. Sure, advertising does play a piece in the way we think, shop, eat, carry out our lives, potentially vote, but at the end of the day Albertans are no idiots. I hope that the other members opposite don't think that they are. If we don't think that Albertans are wise enough to make their own decisions and think critically before they go to the polls, I mean, we should expect better from Albertans.

We are a people of self-determination, hard work, self-responsibility, and frankly we've built one of the best provinces in Canada, if not the best province, and maybe the best region in all of North America, if not the world, because of the hard-working and incredible people who make up this province. If we've trusted them to build the future that we have so far, I am more than confident that we can trust those very Albertans to build an even better future for our province by giving them a direct vote in policy matters, so I am more than happy to support this legislation.

A couple of things I wanted to address are the notion that the ability for referendums did exist in our province before. This is technically true. However, this legislation expands the ability for referendums in our province whereas previously we could only have referendums on constitutional issues, which, Lord knows, that's a whole other can of worms. I mean, a referendum in Alberta does not necessarily guarantee a constitutional amendment at the federal level. While we were only permitted to do constitutional referendums in Alberta before, which really carried not any guaranteed weight at the federal level, this legislation opens us up to have referendums on any policy, whether it is in the Constitution or not, which means that Albertans can really have a direct say in nearly anything they want in our province if they put it to a referendum. This legislation did not exist before, and this is a huge step forward for making sure that Albertans can determine their own destiny.

We heard, I guess, a question as well that was posed, and I'd like to address it. Who did we consult when we made this legislation? Actually, I can answer that question because we did a lot of consultation. Actually, myself and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, I believe, were members of the Fair Deal Panel. This was one of the specific line items that we considered and inevitably ended up recommending on the Fair Deal Panel. If members opposite would like to hear who we consulted, I mean, I can tell them any day. We consulted over 4,000 Albertans at 10 urban town halls, 15 rural town halls in person. We had thousands of e-mail and written submissions, and we had over 40,000 survey responses, Madam Speaker. All of those led us to a recommendation to put this legislation forward today.

4:30

So if members opposite want to know who we consulted, truthfully, we consulted a heck of a lot of people, and we consulted

them from north, central, south, urban, rural, male, female, in person, online, over the telephone, over e-mail, on the Internet. You name it; we consulted a lot before we put this legislation forward, and I am confident that this legislation, putting democracy back in the hands of people, is a positive step for our province. I know that the other members of the Fair Deal Panel can confirm that we heard this time and time and time again through our consultations with the panel and for this legislation today. Just to clear up any question, if anyone was wondering, we did our consultation on this legislation. We do believe here on this side of the House that Albertans are smart enough and self-responsible enough to make decisions to determine their own destiny, and they do not need some government overlords to make those decisions for them. We can put those decisions back in the hands of the people because Albertans are responsible and Albertans are intelligent, and we should be proud of them and trust the responsibility of their future in their hands.

I guess to sum up, I will just say that it's fairly ironic to hear the members opposite claim that we don't consult and that we don't respect democracy when they're the ones who don't want to even advance referendum legislation to committee, where they could at least propose amendments to try to make it better. No. I mean, they seem to be opposing the entire concept of this legislation from the get-go. So it's ironic for them to call us undemocratic when they won't even allow this legislation to get to a point where it could be amended possibly and made better, in their opinion. It's also ironic to hear them say that we don't consult when they are the ones who imposed the single largest tax hike on Albertans in Albertan history through a carbon tax. They say that advertising goes a long way. That's funny because they're right, and I can guarantee you that if they would've advertised the carbon tax, Albertans probably would've voted against it. So funny how that works.

Anyways, Madam Speaker, I am very proud to support this legislation. I am proud to be one of the members of our Fair Deal Panel, who worked to investigate it and learn more about it, see how Albertans feel about it, and I am so proud of our government and our House on this side for supporting democracy in action, giving Albertans a clear say in determining their own futures rather than putting it in the hands of 87 officials in this House.

With that, I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 27

### Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020

[Adjourned debate July 6: Mr. Feehan]

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Can I just ask how much time I have left?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Six minutes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Six minutes. Thank you very much.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill and talk a little bit about the Senate referendum. Of course, it allows us to continue the conversation following from the Bill 26 referendum discussion because it involves very much the same issues, just happens to be on a particularly focused aspect of it.

I just noted that the Member for Banff-Kananaskis made a number of points that continue to be relevant in this bill as well, so I might take a few moments to address some of those as I make

reference to Bill 27 on the Senate. I know that the Member for Banff-Kananaskis has indicated that these two bills came largely from the committee that she was a part of that went around the province and then subsequently made decisions based on what they wanted to hear and submitted a report that led to this bill and the previous bill.

I know that there are concerns that, of course, you know, the fix was in the game and that the outcomes of that process that led to this were predetermined before any kind of conversations went on. The concern is that while there is a pretense that there is a desire to move in a democratic fashion, the very questions that may have been most relevant to these two bills were not asked, because the question at hand is not just simply a question of whether or not we agree with referendum or not. The NDP have clearly said that we agree with the existence of referendum – we’ve had referendum in this province in the past – but that the nature of the referendum is extremely important in a democracy.

The questions that were not asked when they went around is: would you like to allow individuals with extreme amounts of money to have undue influence on these referenda? That question wasn’t asked. The question wasn’t: would we like to have foreign bodies, foreign institutions, and foreign industries who wish to influence our decisions here in the province have the ability to influence us here in this province in terms of our decision-making for their benefit? That question wasn’t asked by this person.

I noticed that in all of these referendum questions, while they keep saying the most important voice is the voice of the population, the people, the public, they did not then set up an independent referendum committee that would establish things such as the question to be asked, how the voting would occur, to supervise the voting to ensure that the voting is fair and just. So if they truly believed that this was going back to the community, why would they not have committed a committee of the community members to actually determine the question to be asked and to supervise the election as it occurs? Instead, they have put all of the power of these two bills in the hands of the Premier. So they can tout all they want about how much they support democracy, but in fact their bill does not do that. Their bill does not allow a fair and balanced discussion of the issues coming forward in this province.

We know that with the Senate bill, one of the problems is that many people in the province and all the polls that have been on the Senate have suggested two things about Senate elections. One is that they do not wish to have a Senate election. There is a significant number of people that say that they do not wish to have that, and their only way to demonstrate that is to not vote in the election. As a result we actually see in the Senate elections that the number of people voting in those elections is greatly diminished from the number of people that are voting in the larger election.

I know, for example, myself, when I have gone into a voting booth and have been offered both a chance to vote on the provincial election that’s at hand and have been offered a chance to vote on the Senate election, I have declined that ballot because of the second reason why people say that we should not have a ballot, and that is that it is a useless electoral process when the decision about who gets to be a Senator is not made here in the province of Alberta; it is made in Ottawa. Ottawa has a chance to make that kind of decision. In fact, what we see is that Senators in the province of Alberta – when the government is not favourable to the person who has been elected, apparently, in these pseudo-elections for the Senate, they simply don’t put them in, so there is no direct relationship between voting for an election in the Senate and the actual appointment of an individual to the Senate. As a result, many people don’t share.

Therefore, what you have is that the people who don’t want to have an election, their voice is diminished. It is taken away. There is not an option that says: don’t have this election.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak? Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to members. Go ahead, Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just wanted to get up and respond to some of the comments made by the previous speaker and speakers previous today. I’ve been pretty amazed to hear the contempt for democracy that is had on the opposite side of the House. I mean, you hear a variety of views in this House at any given time, but what really amazes me is how someone can call an election that the people of Alberta have engaged in, whether it has – I mean, we’ve seen Doug Black come out of that. We have Mike Shaikh. We have people who are ready to serve this province and serve Canadians in the Senate being chosen by the people of Alberta. For any member of this House, who is democratically elected, to call any of that a sort of pseudo-election, I think, is quite insulting to the people who not only put their name on a ballot and worked very hard to ensure that Albertans knew what they were standing for while they were running for those spots but to the people of Alberta who got out and voted for those people to become Senators.

Yes, while the member opposite is correct that it’s up to the Prime Minister to choose that or not, it’s also incumbent on the Prime Minister to listen to the people that he represents. Although he has no seats in Alberta, which Albertans made sure of when they soundly rejected him in 2019, I know that any Prime Minister worth his salt or her salt, when the time comes, would do well to pay attention to the democratic wishes of a certain province, Mr. Speaker.

**4:40**

I think what this all boils down to is that the NDP are afraid of what Albertans want, Mr. Speaker. The last chance that they went to the polls, Albertans rejected them. Like the Member for Banff-Kananaskis said, the truth hurts so bad that it leaves that sting that just quite hasn’t faded yet. I mean, I’m not going to rub salt in their wounds, but when they’re talking about a lack of democracy or, you know, not enough engagement or so on and so forth, I believe the nomination race for Cardston-Siksika had more votes cast in it than the entire NDP leadership race in 2014. If you want to talk about democratic engagement, why don’t we talk about how many contested nominations were had in the NDP? Why don’t we talk about the amount of democratic engagement that they provide to their party members when they’re not hand-selecting candidates and putting them in positions of authority?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, when I come to that, their hand-selected candidates, like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who I have a great deal of respect for as a member of this Chamber, we start to talk about things like centralizing power and authoritarianism and we start to use these buzz words to inflame the rhetoric in this House. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was the one who was praising Hugo Chávez, who certainly didn’t have a good record on democracy and democratic reform and accountability. And the Leader of the Official Opposition, the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, wears a Che Guevara watch. Like, come on. You want to talk about democracy? These are people whose values and whose authority fly in the face of the will of the people.

**Mr. Eggen:** Don't talk about – she does not wear a watch. You can't just make stuff up, right?

**Ms Glasgow:** Oh. Well, you know, it's interesting that the members opposite like to say that we're making stuff up or accuse us of these things. It's reported in very major newspapers, but facts are inconvenient for the members opposite, I guess.

We talk about loopholes and, you know, things that would – at the end of the day these campaigns, these third-party advertisers or anybody who's wishing to, would still have to disclose their contributors. They would still have to go through proper Elections Alberta disclosures. That has not changed. What the NDP is trying to do is fearmonger with Albertans. Maybe they're scared that their union buddies won't be able to advertise. Maybe they're scared that their best friend Gil McGowan, who was I believe on the Legislature grounds this week to testify before one of our committees, won't have as much influence as he did under their watch. Their loophole gave him the ability to spend \$1.8 million on an election and influence Alberta's elections virtually, like the Member for Peace River said last night, doubling their ability to spend on the last election. So maybe that's what's inconvenient for them. Maybe they're worried about not having that extra influence on Albertans. Maybe they're worried about that.

I see a lot of things about confusing Albertans and all these things with too many questions on the ballot or whatever else and this, that, and the other thing. At the end of the day, I think what's different between this side of the House and that side of the House, Madam Speaker, is that on this side of the House we believe that Albertans are intelligent. We believe that Albertans have the ability to make tough decisions, and when it came down to it, Albertans chose a government that would stand up for their democratic rights.

And I just want to thank the Member for Banff-Kananaskis, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who went across the province and listened to those needs. They participated in grassroots democracy, Madam Speaker. I don't know what is more grassroots democracy than allowing members of this province and people within this province to let the government know what issues are the most important to them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at second reading of Bill 27. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and add to the debate on Bill 27, which has certainly been wide-ranging and covering a wide variety of topics. Certainly, I want to speak to the substance of the bill, but I would also like to speak to many of the topics that have been raised by both government and opposition members in regard to the overall discussion that we're having around this bill, which the government continues to argue is simply about increasing democracy in the province of Alberta. Since that has been their argument for this bill, and indeed we just heard the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat making a number of comments and suggestions and allegations along those lines, I'd like to take part of my debate to also reference and discuss those.

It's been interesting, Madam Speaker, listening to government members and the claims they wish to make about what they consider to be democracy in the province of Alberta, at least in terms of: there's the democracy that they're willing to support, and then there's the democracy that they are not. It seems that they are very interested in democracy as long as folks agree with them, but in any situation where they recognize that Albertans likely do not, they're very quick to put a thumb on the scale. It seems they are

very quick to try to design and implement processes to try to screen out the voices of Albertans they don't want to respect or hear from.

The Member for Banff-Kananaskis said that Albertans don't need some government overlords telling them what to do, yet her government colleagues sat on a committee this week that, in fact, did precisely that, that ignored the voices of thousands of Albertans who participated in a petition, a democratic process, Madam Speaker, which has been in place in this province for decades as a way of raising the voice of the people in this Legislature. Thousands of Albertans signed a petition calling on those members to support a private member's bill protecting their pensions, to have the opportunity to be debated democratically here on the floor of this Legislature. These government members acted unilaterally to ignore the wishes of those Albertans. They chose to be those government overlords telling people what to do. Indeed, they passed the legislation that caused the very situation with no consultation with Albertans.

Again, this government likes to try to claim democracy where it's convenient for them, but let's be clear. This is a government that has been all about seizing unilateral power for themselves and their ministers. When it comes to things that impact Albertans' everyday lives, this government is not consulting Albertans. They are not hearing their voice. They are not making room for more democracy. They are imposing their will, saying that the one vote that was held in April of last year gives them the right to do whatever they want. That's democracy for this government, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Yes, indeed. Members have already been fond, I hear, of telling constituents who come to see them with concerns: well, if you don't like it, you can vote me out in the next election. That's a fact. That's what these government members consider to be democracy.

Talking about hand-selecting candidates and putting them in positions of authority, we are talking here today, of course, about a bill that has to do with the Senate Election Act. Of course, it's not changing anything about those elections except to put more money into the process, but speaking of that, since they raised the issue of hand-selecting candidates and putting them in positions of authority in a nondemocratic process, unlike the Senate election process, which we are talking about here, which at least does incorporate an actual vote, what we have seen from this government is that indeed they have largely eschewed any of the previous processes that were in place where there was actually vetting and actually an application process for the boards and commissions in the province of Alberta and instead have chosen to – and I quote – hand-select candidates and put them in positions of authority. Again, democracy where it is convenient for this government, Madam Speaker, but heavy-handed, unilateral, nigh on dictatorship where it is not.

They say that they believe Albertans are intelligent and able to make tough decisions. They didn't give Albertans the opportunity to make that decision on their pensions. They unilaterally decided what would happen for them. [interjection] The Member for Cardston-Siksika suggests that they could have a referendum. Not under this legislation, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Schow:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Okay. I apologize. It wasn't the Member for Cardston-Siksika. It was a different government member that made that comment.

4:50

**The Deputy Speaker:** Moving forward, comments are to be directed through the chair.

Please proceed.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I apologize, Madam Speaker.

I heard a government member suggest that they could have a referendum. Now, let's be clear. Under this legislation, no, they could not. Actually, that would be Bill 26, which we were debating earlier, which gives the Premier the opportunity to decide the question, to decide how the question will be worded, when the question gets voted on, who gets to vote on it, where the voting happens. So unilateral power.

Let's be clear. Again, it's another example where government members continually say, as on this bill, Bill 27, about the Senate Election Act, as with many others, that they are bringing in more democracy when, in fact, Madam Speaker, they are doing nothing of the kind. This government likes to give the appearance of democracy. Indeed, they're very good at giving that appearance and putting on that display, that dog-and-pony show. But when it comes down to the road, this government simply wants to either seize more unilateral power for itself, whether that's through legislation like Bill 10 or Bill 1, to change the rules in that respect to simply hand themselves more power, or, as we see with Bill 27 or Bill 26 or many others – we're talking today and now about Bill 27 – putting more money into that system so that their deep-pocketed friends can wield that influence for them.

Now, indeed, that is the pattern that we have seen, as many of my colleagues have spoken about at great length today – and I will probably have the opportunity to do so at some future point in the debate – because it's an important thing to reflect on when we are talking about electoral processes and money in politics, as we are here on Bill 27. That is precisely what we have seen as the direct behaviour of this Premier and the folks who surrounded him in his leadership campaign. It's on the record, it's in the newspaper, and it's been published. The e-mails are there. It has been revealed. That is how this government's Premier approaches democracy. So I will take no lectures from them about respect for Albertans and respect for allowing them a vote when the record is so entirely clear that when it comes to where it counts, they have been unwilling to do so themselves.

Unfortunately, that's been a pattern with this government in so many respects, and I will perhaps save more of my comments in that direction for the opportunity I will eventually have to speak to Bill 26, because it is deeply concerning. There is much that could be said about the manner in which this government has appointed people to panels and the way they've used those panels and indeed done quite a bit to encourage the direction of the reports of those panels, I would say. Again, this is not a government that respects democracy. It likes the appearance of democracy when it allows them to do what they intended to do in the first place or what they hope to accomplish.

In this bill that we have in front of us here, Bill 27, really the only purpose of this bill that I can see appears to be to change the rules around third-party advertising to allow a third-party advertiser to run concurrent accounts at the same time. Now, those third-party advertisers can spend up to \$30,000 in a Senate election. So the sole reason that this legislation appears to be here in front of the House is because they feel that people, third-party advertisers in particular, should be able to spend more money in a senatorial election in the province of Alberta.

Now, members of the government may believe that more money equals more democracy. I disagree. Now, we recognize, of course, that there needs to be some funding in a political race. Absolutely. I spent the allowable limit in the last election, indeed, because it's important. It's how you get the information out. I had to pay for my campaign office. That in itself is an exercise in democracy, Madam Speaker. That is the work of it.

Indeed, the rules that our government brought in to limit the amount of spending on a campaign from the hundreds of thousands of dollars that some Conservative candidates spent in the past: that was an exercise in democracy, keeping it accessible to the average individual. Dumping more money into third-party advertisers, Madam Speaker, is not increasing democracy. That is creating more noise. That is creating more distraction. That is making it more difficult for individuals who do not have access to that kind of money, who do not have rich friends who can fund multiple third-party campaigns concurrently, to put their name up for vote.

If the government truly believes that the senatorial election is an important one for Albertans and an important voice for democracy in the province of Alberta, why do they feel it should be decided by the person who has the most money? Why do they feel there has to be more money in it for it to remain democratic? For all the clever retorts that these members want to bring up and all the jabs they want to take at us as the Official Opposition, they have yet to answer that question.

Let's be clear. The bills that we are seeing in front of us, Bill 27 today and accompanied by bills 26 and 29, are all of a piece, and they are all targeted at putting more money into the democratic process. They are all targeted at making it more difficult to tell who that money is coming from and where it is going. That, Madam Speaker, is not democracy, but these government members seem to want to believe that as long as it says "democracy" on the outside of the tin, it doesn't matter what kind of garbage they've got inside.

Albertans are indeed intelligent, Madam Speaker, as these members have said, and this is perhaps why they did not actually go and talk to the media when they introduced these bills, why the Minister of Justice did not actually go out and want to explain to Albertans what he is actually doing in Bill 27. They recognize that Albertans are intelligent enough that if they actually told them the substance of their bills, Albertans would have none of it. Instead, they stand here and grandstand and talk about: "Oh, it's more democracy. It's more democracy. We won't explain what that democracy is or what exactly we're doing. Just be happy with the outside of the box, and trust us that inside it's good."

To be clear, Madam Speaker, this government has given us no reason to trust them with these types of decisions, as we have seen repeatedly and as has been referenced when this Premier himself participated in a democratic process to become the leader of this party. There is quite a cloud of suspicious and fraudulent action that surrounded it. He likes to talk loudly about the voice of democracy that brought him here, but he does not talk about those many questions or the folks who have been fined or the RCMP investigation, which is still ongoing, or the fact that he had to fire the Election Commissioner.

That is not democracy, Madam Speaker. If we want democracy, then let's go out and actually tell Albertans what it is this government is doing precisely and ask their actual opinion. Let's see the precise results; let's see the numbers. How many Albertans, when they participated in that Fair Deal Panel, came to you and said, "Please, I want you to put more money in our senatorial race" or, when they asked for a referendum, said, "Absolutely, we should have more referendums, but please make sure that only the Premier gets to decide the question"?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak with respect to Bill 27, which is currently before this House. I have been listening to the members opposite talk about the bill that is before this House, the Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020, in

a way that tries to convey that what the government members on this side are trying to accomplish is to deny people, citizens, their opportunity to freely exercise their constitutional right to vote.

5:00

You know, Madam Speaker, it is odd that the members opposite would make these characterizations. I listened to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford describe the Senate elections as pseudo-elections. Do you know the countries where elections are referred to as pseudo-elections? It's not Korea. There is Russia, Venezuela, Bolivia. Do you know what is similar with the members opposite in terms of their philosophical ideology? There is precisely the mentality and world view of these countries that I have just mentioned. These are a bunch of socialists. These are... [interjections] Yes. I am on 29(2)(a), and I'm responding to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. Correct. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. minister has the floor.

Please continue, hon. minister, under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The members opposite: you know, this is the sort of thing that they would not want to hear on the floor of this House. The Member for Edmonton-City Centre talks about third parties. The Alberta Federation of Labour in the NDP constitution: the NDP have got – they call it a provincial council, which you could sum up as the brain behind the NDP. There is the organ that directs what the members opposite can do or cannot do. The Alberta Federation of Labour has a voting interest defined in their constitution. It does not only stop there. That same provision in their constitution also says that every single affiliate of the AFL also has got one voting member in that provincial council.

Madam Speaker, the AFL and the NDP union allies spent more than \$1.8 million on third-party advertising.

**Ms Ganley:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order

#### Question-and-comment Period

**Ms Ganley:** Madam Speaker, I think we've had a fairly wide latitude here today, but 29(2)(a) is supposed to be a response to the speaker who spoke immediately before. While hurling random insults may in some universes be considered a response or making things up, as the hon. minister was engaged in, I think that perhaps if we could redirect the debate rather than to suggest that the members on this side of the House apparently all share collectively only one brain...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for questions or comments, which are very clearly being addressed by the minister. There is a wide swath in which questions or comments can be made under this standing order, which has been allowed for every single member in this House and will continue to be that way until otherwise ruled not, and it certainly will not be by me.

I will ask the hon. minister to continue his questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) for the remaining one minute and 23 seconds.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I am on 29(2)(a) and in response to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, who was talking about third-party advertisers.

No wonder that, you know, the president of the AFL, Gil McGowan, described Albertans as nutbars. These are members opposite who like to talk about democracy on the floor of this particular House as if they are really interested in what that means, as if, if given the opportunity, that is exactly what they are going to put into practice. After all, the members opposite, while they were in office for four years – again let's talk about democracy. Poll after poll showed that the people of Alberta were opposed to the carbon tax. You know what they did? They ignored the polls and the views of the people of Alberta and implemented a carbon tax that nearly destroyed our economy.

Madam Speaker, you know, those of us over here believe in the power of the people to determine their own fate, and that is why we are putting forward...

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to speak in second reading of Bill 27? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To have this opportunity to engage on Bill 27, which is currently titled the Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020 – I'm happy to be able to engage. I do want to note, though, that I believe this is already the second time this particular piece of legislation has come back for further amendments, so I guess one of the questions I had originally when I was reading was: why didn't this happen when we were already amending this not that long ago? Another question I had was: was this part of the election platform for either party? It was not, from my readings through the platforms. "So why now?" is one of the questions that that naturally takes you to, when it wasn't campaigned on in the last election and it wasn't done when the government was already updating this piece of legislation. One of the potential outcomes I came to is because it's part of a suite of other bills that contribute to the same outcome, which, again, is an outcome about bringing big money into Alberta elections and particularly doing that through amendments to Senate spending, as this bill outlines.

I also want to revisit some comments that were made by prior speakers. I know that one person on our side talked about how this type of an election, when the outcome of the election doesn't determine who gets appointed – the fact that Ottawa determines who gets appointed is an interesting point that we're at today, and I can't help but think that if the Premier, the leader of Executive Council, that's bringing this bill forward for all of us to consider, wanted to change the way Senators were appointed, definitely in the 20 years when he was in Ottawa and 10 of those at the table, that was a part of Senate appointees, it would have made a lot of sense, I think. If he actually wanted an election to determine the outcome, he certainly had a lot of agency, at the time when he was actually a part of the order of government that actually does the Senate appointments, to be able to make those changes. He's certainly a very long-serving member in the House of Commons and left with one of the largest public pensions I can ever recall and then came back here and immediately took to tinker with other people's public pensions, including many teachers who have reached out to not just me but all members of this House.

Again, I think this is a bit of a signal call around things that the Premier definitely had a great deal of agency to address when he was in Ottawa and chose not to over those many years, but now he's here finding a way to keep the same process in place but bring more money into it. I find that troubling, and I think it doesn't actually reflect the values that most people, well, that anyone campaigned on, because it wasn't in anyone's election platform. I don't think it probably reflects the values that most of us as individuals bring

forward with us in our day-to-day lives and also as we come into this place.

The changes that we'll see through this: the big change, of course, is that the Senate Election Act allows for third-party advertising, to have the Senate election advertising account, to keep referendum, Senate, local, and provincial issues separate. Again, the \$30,000 for Senate elections is a piece that's new, and that's being driven specifically by this provincial government, that again can put forward a question, but it's actually up to the federal government and specifically the Prime Minister and cabinet to make determinations about who actually does get appointed.

5:10

Again, the Premier had ample opportunity while he sat at that table to make actual, substantial changes to the way Senators are appointed if that was indeed his desired outcome. I imagine that if it was, he would have done so, though. Here we are today, tinkering with the edges and bringing more money that doesn't have the same kind of controls over spending as we would have in provincial elections or even federal elections, that same oversight in the same ways that we do here.

Just to reiterate, the point that was made by my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford was not about whether or not electing people is good; it was that this actually isn't an election because what it does is that it puts forward potentially a list of names for another order of government to consider. Again, the Premier had many, many years in Ottawa. If it was a priority to change the way that the Senate operates, I would have hoped that at any point in those 20 years he would have taken the agency that he had to actually act upon what he says now are his convictions. I find that disingenuous, I would say.

I think that the big-money machine definitely diminishes the way that representation happens. I think a lot of us look at American elections and don't envy the type of politics they have down there. Sometimes I envy the weather of certain states in the winter, but I definitely am proud of our democratic system here in Canada. I'm proud of our public education and our public health care systems here in Canada, and those are things that I think we're seeing the Americanization of, over and over again, under this government, the current government.

Seeing the move to bring more big money into politics, I think, is highly problematic. Some of us have attended conferences with some American legislators. I wasn't at one personally, but I know, through conversations with colleagues, that many of those legislators aren't actually paid or are paid a very small stipend, and they got there through big-money campaigns. It means that you're only actually creating opportunities for certain people to actually be engaged in democracy in environments like that because only certain people can afford to work for free and only certain people can access the donations that are being sought for these types of campaigns.

I think, again, this is another demonstration, through this bill, of an erosion of our Canadian democratic systems, that I think we should all be proud of. I think about the traditions that we carry forward and how we're here to make them stronger, I would argue, not weaker, so I'm worried that with this injection again of third-party advertising money, the fact that it was done and the timing in which it was, rather than if this was something that wanted to be proposed to the people of Alberta – I know there are things that were in the platform that haven't been done yet, so why is this taking priority over other things that were actually in a platform, that were openly campaigned for, and that were put forward to the people of Alberta? I don't agree with everything in the platform, but at least if I can trace it back to the platform, I understand where

the motivation is and can understand why the Premier and cabinet are bringing it forward in a more overt way, in a more respectful way, I'd say. Again, amending this legislation for the second time doesn't bring great confidence to me that there won't be more amendments as time continues.

The other thing I want to say, from my experience sitting around the executive table, is that there is only so much time for so many bills, and there are a lot of great ideas, particularly from having, I'm sure, a caucus with varied experiences. For me, when I was bringing forward a bill, I would ask myself: is this everything we want to change on this piece of legislation? I don't want to have to go back to my colleagues again in a few months and say: we can't do the other things that you think are important because I need to do yet another thing in this bill that I've already changed.

Here we are for the second time dealing with amendments to this piece of legislation, and there is only so much time. We all know that time is precious. It's a commodity that moves, in COVID times, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, but there are still only a certain number of bills that we will ever get through in this place. To make these bills priorities, bills that have again amended pieces of legislation that had previously been amended – I know that there are great ideas among the cabinet and among private members that deserve the merit of debate in this place. I know from private members giving members' statements, for example, that there is a desire to do more around protecting the number of people who are driving who might have a medical condition and protecting all of us from future accidents. I think that these ideas also deserve merit and discussion.

So to bring forward a piece of legislation that essentially keeps the voting the same but brings in so much more money and doesn't actually change the process, the process which could be changed at the federal level, which this Premier was a part of for two decades approximately, I think begs the question of: why is this the priority for this government? Of the top 27 things to do in 2020, why did this make the cut, and why did so many other things not?

Again, this bill wasn't in the platform. It does bring more spending and more advertising in during a variety of elections, and I think the only purpose of this bill appears to be the rules around third-party advertising to allow an advertiser to run concurrent accounts at the same time, being able to run accounts related to Senate elections, to a referendum question, to a municipal or a provincial election. This is a lot of money being funnelled to our voting base, the people of Alberta, all in one time, I think, intended to flood the airwaves with those who have the deepest pockets and the most, therefore, influence. I don't think that that is good democracy. I think good democracy enables all individuals to seek office and to have the opportunity to have their voice heard and to have the opportunity to represent themselves and their communities.

I want to reiterate some of the comments made by my colleague the Member for St. Albert earlier in debate on Bill 26, where she was getting to that there is so much more we have to do in terms of engaging all Albertans and ensuring that this is a true representative democracy, and that includes reaching out to ensure that we create space for folks who are underrepresented.

One area that I don't think was discussed particularly on that point is class and income base. There are a lot of us who, regardless of how much money we make here today, made more than the average, certainly, before we were elected to this office, and what does that say about everyone's ability to participate in democracy? So I think we have a lot of work to do on ensuring that racialized, gender-diverse, gender-identity diverse, orientation-diverse folks, ability-variant folks, and also income-base folks have not just the ability but a true opportunity to engage fully. By bringing in more

third-party advertising and more donations to these types of elections, I think it really erodes that instead of strengthening it.

Those are some things where I doubt that, when we have conversations in the backroom or in the hallways of this building, anyone would say that their intent is to bring more big money into politics, but that's definitely what this bill is doing, this bill as part of other bills in this session. Again, the timing in relation to the municipal elections coming in just over a year is problematic, to say it lightly.

The Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020, I think, is something that – again, why are we doing this twice? You all know that there's only a certain amount of legislative time and opportunity available to members of this House, where this term is going quickly, and the second half will go even faster than the first. I can speak from personal experience. So how do we make sure that we don't spend our time finding ways to strengthen the voices of those who already have strong voices? How do we make sure we create an opportunity for all of us to engage in this place and bring our best ideas forward and move forward with legislation that, I think, we can all be proud of?

I want to also say that we haven't had so many in the current configuration of the Legislature, but in past sittings of the Legislature there were times where we had a number of bills that saw unanimous support from both sides of the House. I think that those days where things are brought forward that do definitely meet the needs of all Albertans and address things in a way that's strategic and thoughtful and focused on democracy and the vulnerable rather than strengthening the voices of the already powerful are the days I look forward to most in this place.

5:20

I think that we probably already have a good idea of what the legislation is going to look like in the remainder of this sitting of this Legislature, but I hope that we take the opportunity in the weeks that we aren't here to think about how we can bring us together rather than continue to divide us as a province. I think that this bill is one more on the list that probably won't get unanimous support in this place, particularly because of the overt injection of more money into politics and, specifically, money for third parties in advertising. I think we do have a lot more work to do on finding ways that we can strengthen democracy, and I believe that this is just further erosion.

One of the questions that was asked by one of my colleagues is . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was absolutely fascinated by what the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was saying there, and I would like for her – she sort of got cut off mid-sentence. I would love to hear the remainder of what she had to say.

**Ms Hoffman:** One of the questions that was asked – oh, this is funny. When you said “fascinated,” I started laughing and then lost my train of thought. Thank you, hon. colleague.

One of the questions that was asked by one of our colleagues was specifically around consultation and who was actually involved in making these decisions around this injection of more money into these democratic elections, and then there were, of course, questions around if this is true democracy or if this is an attempt – and, again, something that could have very easily been addressed by the Premier when he was in Ottawa for oh-so-many years sitting around the cabinet table and had the ability to actually do real

changes to the Senate as opposed to coming back here and making changes to how much money can be spent on the existing process. Those are some of the big questions that still remain, and I doubt we'll get to an answer on them. But definitely it wasn't in the platform.

It is an injection of more money. When I look at this in conjunction with other pieces like the changes to local elections, municipal and school board, and the fact that we could see so many opportunities for people to give money to so many different candidates – we don't do that in provincial elections. You're only allowed to give up to about \$4,300 now with the adjustment to the \$4,000 cap. That's all you're allowed to give whereas with the changes that we're seeing now with the Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, it's significantly more donations here as well, more donations to the third-party advertising, multiple donations to the municipal and school board candidates.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I think that there are some ways that we could make democracy stronger, and I don't think that this suite of bills passes that test, unfortunately. It's disappointing because I would like to be able to come here and vote for a number of pieces of government legislation and feel that I'm representing my constituents, but when bills like this come forward, I don't think they're about representing our constituents. I think they're about finding ways for the deepest pockets to have the loudest voices and therefore the most power and influence even in our democracy. To me, that is definitely a move backwards, not a move forward.

Those are my overarching concerns as they relate to Bill 27 at this current stage in second reading. I am hopeful that maybe some amendments will come forward that we can find unanimous support for in this place and make it a little bit better. Again, to say that time moves quickly, we have a finite amount of opportunity to engage on legislation to move Alberta forward, not backwards, and I do seriously fret that this is a move backwards. This is a move that will only make the voices of the biggest donors louder, not everyday Albertans. Those are, again, my overarching concerns with this bill.

Again, if the Premier wanted to make a lot of changes to the Senate, he certainly had a long time, while he was earning that very big pension in Ottawa, to make those changes rather than coming back here, attacking local pensions, and then trying to tinker with the margins when it comes to the processes in which the Senate exists.

Those are my overarching comments with Bill 27 at this stage. I look forward to opportunities as it proceeds to consider ways we can make it less regressive, perhaps, one might say. I want to thank the members for their comments on this legislation so far. I think that we've had a number of useful points raised, and I look forward to hearing more from all members of this Assembly on how we could actually strengthen democracy. I think that that should be an underlying value of those of us who have the privilege of being here democratically elected.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are only approximately 20 seconds left under Standing Order 29(2)(a), depending on how brief the comment is from the hon. associate minister.

We are on second reading of Bill 27, the Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020. I recognize the hon. the associate minister of red tape – correction. The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been called worse. I'd like to make a motion that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 28

#### Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020

[Debate adjourned July 6]

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good to see you. It's an honour to rise today to speak on Bill 28, Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020, moved by the hon. Minister of Service Alberta. I want to take a moment to thank that minister, the Minister of Service Alberta, for bringing this bill forward. It's a real commitment to Albertans and vulnerable populations in trying to keep them safe. It's a step that our government is taking to keep Albertans safe in general. We've had a lot of conversations about things like rural crime, but also this one in particular hits very close to home. I'm very grateful to that minister, you know, and I know that this is – I certainly don't want to speak for that minister, but I suspect it's quite close to him as a new father of baby Max, who I think is turning one here pretty soon, a good-looking kid. Congratulations to the minister on their first.

It's just so important that this bill comes forward. I think an important question to ask is: what is in a name? What does it mean? How much value does it carry? To me, my last name is very important to me.

**Ms Hoffman:** Don't say it.

**Mr. Schow:** I'm well aware of the standing orders. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I'm sure I'll get more direction from the members opposite as I speak on this very serious topic.

You know, what is in a name? My mother's maiden name is Harker. That carries a lot of importance to me as well, a lot of significance. My grandfather fought in World War II, and my paternal grandfather also served in that war, and their fathers before them were pioneers of southern Alberta. When you live in southern Alberta, like I do, a name carries a lot. It has a lot of meaning. You want to do the best you can to represent that name, and I would never want to change my last name, but there are those who might want to for nefarious reasons.

Let me paint a bit of a picture here. In 2001 I moved to southern Alberta from Ontario. I'd lived in a small town just outside of Ottawa, and my parents picked up and they said: "We're moving to Alberta. We're moving back home." Okay. All of us six kids and the parents: we got two huge U-Hauls, three vehicles, got them across the country. If you'll bear with me through this story, when we got to Alberta and the small town of Magrath, we drove these massive, biggest U-Hauls you can get, two of them, just chockablock with furniture. Within minutes of parking those U-Hauls, the entire street walked up to those U-Hauls and, without even saying anything besides introducing themselves, started taking the furniture out of the trucks and unloaded that furniture. That's the way you do things in southern Alberta. In southern Alberta and a lot of places around this province you rally around your neighbours. You assume the best of your neighbours. You're there to help your neighbours.

5:30

Let's imagine for a moment that you're living in a small town in Alberta or in one of the urban centres. Edmonton and Calgary are delightful places, but I'm proud to live in Cardston. Let's imagine

your new neighbour comes over and introduces himself and says, "My name is Ted Bundy" or "My name is Jeffrey Dahmer" or "My name is John Gacy" or, even closer to Canada, "Paul Bernardo." Now, I suspect some members in this House, if shown a number of pictures, could pick those individuals out in those pictures. A lot of members probably could not, but you'd know the names. You'd know the notorious names, and you'd know the heinous crimes attached to those names. How uncomfortable would you feel if you knew that your next-door neighbour was one of those four individuals that I just mentioned? The answer is: very uncomfortable.

Now, what if those people came by or they moved in next door and you helped them move in and they said, "My name is Ted Clancy" or anything else under the sun that they want to change their name to. You wouldn't know those names from a hole in the wall. You'd just assume the best. That's what Albertans do. We're good people in this province.

There is so much in a name. That's why this bill is so important, to ensure that those who would victimize the most vulnerable populations in this province cannot continue to do so under the guise of a new alias. But this is an actual problem that we're facing. When developing legislation, you have to be addressing an issue, a problem, and we do see that every year about 4,000 Albertans complete a name change from their record of birth, and there are a number of reasons for that. You know, in a speech I gave earlier in this Chamber, I made mention that I cast a bit of an aspersion on the members opposite for legislation that I disagreed with. But they did get some things right, and one was that they no longer publish the name changes in the *Alberta Gazette* to protect those individuals. I don't have an issue with that. But there are some other individuals who, if their names were changed, people might forget or might not know the heinous crimes they've committed.

For example, Graham James was convicted in 1997, changed his name around 2016 to Michael James. I wouldn't say that that's super original considering that it's the same last name. Kevin Daniel Hudec was designated a long-term offender in 2016; he changed his name in March 2018 and was arrested merely weeks later, and in January 2020 he was back in court to face charges related to child pornography. David Shumey, a convicted sex offender from the United States, changed his name to David Donald Stryker and is now living in Regina. The Minister of Justice in Saskatchewan did not know that he had re-entered Canada. Justin Gerard Gryba was convicted in 2016 for making child pornography, one of the many disgusting crimes that these individuals that I mentioned beforehand are guilty of; he changed his name shortly thereafter as well.

Mr. Speaker, the reality here is that as a father and as someone who was elected to represent the best interests of the province, the citizens, and the future of this province, it's incumbent upon me and other members of this Chamber to ensure their safety, and a bill like this, though it may not save or stop the victimization of thousands of people – maybe it will; I wouldn't be able to comment on that. If you can stop even one person's life being altered forever at the hands of a disgusting individual who would take advantage of some sort of circumstance or control over another, I would consider this bill a success. If I can save one person, I would consider this bill a success.

I think of my own daughter. You know, I thought I was a tough guy growing up. Then I had a daughter, and then I realized: I got nothing. You know, I look at my daughter and I think: man, heaven forbid, when she gets old enough to drive and asks to borrow a vehicle, I'm going to have a hard time saying no. I hope she doesn't see this speech because then she'll definitely take advantage of that. But the reality is that I think of her, and I think of my two sons,

Atlas and Ulysses, and I think: what can I do as a father to protect them?

There are a lot of measures that my wife and I take to ensure their safety. You know, we have rules in the house on where they can go and where they can't go with and without us, things about not talking to strangers. We'll continue to teach them those important rules, how to protect themselves maybe when we're not around because I can't be there forever. I would love to be, but every morning when I get up, my knees and ankles scream at me. I can tell I'm getting older, so I know I won't be there forever. The point here is, Mr. Speaker, that I would love to be there every moment of their lives to protect them, but I can't. I can help them and teach them correct principles so they can learn in the future. But if I can pass this bill, which I support wholeheartedly, I will know that I've taken one more step toward ensuring their safety long term.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have a ton of things to say on this besides how important this bill is to me, how grateful I am to the minister for putting this bill forward, and how grateful I am for this opportunity to speak on this bill as I will likely speak on it again. I encourage all my colleagues in this Chamber, both in the government and on the opposition side, who I trust also have the best interests of Albertans in mind, to look at this bill on its merits and recognize that we are talking simply about the safety of Albertans. We're talking about the safety of our kids, of our neighbours' kids, because we are stewards over our own families and the families of others.

That's the way Albertans do it. If your neighbour is in trouble and you know about it, you do whatever you can to help them out. You don't have to be elected to do it. You can be elected, but what you need to do is recognize that there's someone else in need and step in. It's the Alberta way, and I'm proud to be an Albertan, proud to stand in this Chamber and represent the fine people of Cardston-Siksika, represent my family name, and represent the Harker name and so many other names that I wear as I go further down the genealogy of my family, my ancestors.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I will take my seat.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to make a few comments in response to the previous speaker in that I agree with him that all of us here in the House absolutely, truly believe that the safety of children has got to be paramount in our decision-making. As such, I certainly would like to see the government move on a number of different issues that would help to ensure that children are safe in our society, but I also want, especially for those people listening to the debate, to point out that I don't believe this bill actually does make people safer although obviously the intent is there. I actually agree with the statement from the member that even if it saved one child from one bad experience, I certainly would support that and, as a result, will vote in favour of the bill. You're right: one child is enough to make it a successful bill.

My concern after 30 years as a social worker with a specialization in the area of child sexual abuse is that sometimes we let people believe that there is safety where safety doesn't exist, and that becomes problematic in that if someone believes that they're safe in a situation where they're not, they tend to be less self-protective. I'm not thinking of the children; I'm thinking more of the parents. The example given by the member opposite, you know, of going into a small town and being introduced to somebody: if they said that their name was Paul Bernardo, you would react to that because you know that name. He was able to list, I think, four names initially. Of course, I immediately recognized all the names, and as

a result, yeah, I'd be very upset to find out I was living next door to an abuser.

**5:40**

There are two facts about that which I think we need to point out. I'd be happy to try to give a little bit of time, if I can get myself to do that, for the member to speak to. The two facts are, one, that he's able to name four people when we know that the number of offenders that exist in the country of Canada is in the thousands and, as a result, you are very unlikely to know the name of an offender. Secondly, nothing about this law changes the fact that in law we don't have to use our own legal names. If you arrived in a small town and somebody said, "Hi, my name is Joe Do-Do-Do," you would have to believe that was their name. Of course, any offender who chose to hide the fact that they're offending is likely to use an alias. As a result, I don't think this bill actually provides any safety because it doesn't actually force people to identify themselves as an offender to their community members and so on. That's it.

I mean, I do support the bill. I pray that it actually saves at least some child from harm somewhere sometime. That's what makes me want to say: "Well, fine. Let's go for it." My concern is that I think it was a very weak attempt to address a very serious and complex problem. I did spend some time last night going on about at least five other suggestions I had that could have been in the bill that weren't there. But, you know, given what we have in front of us, I will support it. I just want to make sure that people recognize that the bill really doesn't do anything. If an offender does wish to change their name – we're talking about convicted offenders. They have to report that already, so institutions and governments already know if there is a change of name. Probation officers and parole officers already know that. A change of address or a change of alias are all required reporting.

I just wanted to bring that point out because I don't want people to invest too much into the outcome of the bill, but I do support it in the hopes that some good will be derived. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** There are approximately 30 seconds remaining if the member would like to respond.

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. I recognize and acknowledge the comments made by the member opposite, and I appreciate his concern. I know he has a rich history of working with vulnerable populations, and I think that he should be applauded for his time doing that. I also recognize that it is impossible for us to legislate the necessity for someone to introduce themselves by their legal name as opposed to an alias. So I recognize that there may be shortfalls, but anything I can do to help vulnerable populations from being victimized, I'm there.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a great opportunity for me to express my support for Bill 28, Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020. I would like to applaud and thank the Minister of Service Alberta for listening to the numerous Albertans and stakeholders who have voiced their concerns on this serious issue, the ability of sex offenders to have their name changed legally.

Our government's platform included the promise to make life better for Albertans. Included in that promise, we committed to protect vulnerable Albertans with legislation and increased funding for Alberta's specialized law enforcement agencies that combat domestic violence, stalkers, child exploitation and abuse, gang activity, and drug trafficking. This bill further strengthens our commitments to helping survivors of sexual assault by ensuring that convicted sex offenders cannot hide in our communities under new

names. It also follows the action from our government to increase police resources to fight rural crime in our province, Clare's law, and the protection for survivors of human trafficking.

Prohibiting convicted sex offenders from being able to legally change their name is just one of the simplest steps the government can take to ensure that Albertans have a sense of safety, security, and protection in their communities. It is disturbing and unacceptable that convicted sex offenders that are unstable are currently able to change their legal name and can easily hide from their past. This is improper, Mr. Speaker. Designated offences include sexual exploitation, incest, aggravated sexual assault, child pornography, and others. Those convicted of designated sexual offences under the Criminal Code will be ineligible to complete a legal change of name in Alberta. By amending the current legislation, which is the Vital Statistics Act, any corresponding regulation to prohibit convicted sex offenders from being able to change their name will ensure that offenders will have to live under their own names. It is unfair for the survivors and victims of sexual violence that are facing the long-term effects of trauma and for all Albertans that reside here.

This is a major concern for Albertans. The media has recently reported several stories about sex offenders although not about them legally changing their names. But there is a high possibility and a risk to giving a chance for offenders to take the opportunity to change their names if this amendment is not immediately taken seriously or implemented. Alberta already has one of the strongest legislations around some changes, but despite this safeguard convicted sex offenders have still been allowed to legally change their names, provided that their applications met all legislated requirements. These proposed changes will make it even stronger, which will prevent the possibility to hide their identities.

Mr. Speaker, we must do everything that we can to protect children and vulnerable Albertans. That is why it is important for this bill to pass. There have been many groups and stakeholders who have voiced their support of this bill.

Under the existing rules anyone applying for a legal change of name in Alberta must be fingerprinted and submit an RCMP fingerprint confirmation letter with their application. What the bill seeks to add to the requirement is that any person who is 18 years of age or older applying to change their name will have to submit a criminal record check or a police information check with their legal change of name application. Anyone who has been convicted of specific sexual offences will not be eligible for a legal change of name.

With the sustained ordeal, the challenges of the victims of those offences that violate moral standards, the pain and suffering are too much for them to face. It may take a long time for them to recover while the effects of the trauma will be with them for the rest of their lives. It would hurt them even more if the offenders have secured a new name change and identity to hide their wrongful act in the past. This bill will make sure that the sexual offenders have to live by their own names.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the offenders may be rehabilitated, and we respect the role and value of restorative justice. But we must recognize that the provision for changing their names will not block their ability to re-establish their standing in the community through different avenues for treatment. It will not restrain them from doing good deeds and from moving on to new horizons of their lives. I believe that a person's unlawful act in the past can be outshined by the exercise of remorse, good deeds, service to the community, and other acts that would show complete reformation. Changing their name would not be considered as one big factor in accomplishing that.

This bill has a similar purpose as the order in council which was passed by the province of Saskatchewan last January, Mr. Speaker. The order introduced a criminal record check as part of the change of name application process and also provides that it would not be in the public interest to register a change of name for a person convicted of specific sexual offences. Our government will continue to work with other provinces and territories so that the implementation of similar legislation and orders will be made, ensuring that the same goal and purpose will be as well attained in other jurisdictions. Other jurisdictions like Ontario and Nova Scotia are considering changes to strengthen requirements for an application to change name. The minister, together with the proper minister from Saskatchewan, has sent a joint letter to their counterparts in other provinces and territories to consider these changes and to encourage them to take a similar legislative approach to legal name changes, at the same time explaining that this is a step in a better direction. It will be more effective as part of our pan-Canadian approach. I know that this will receive positive remarks from other governments and that they will likely adopt these changes as we try to work harmoniously together.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to single out sexual offenders. Alberta already maintains a high-risk offender registry. Before a serious and violent offender is released from a federal prison or provincial correctional centre into the community, police determine if the offender presents a significant safety risk to the public and determines how best to inform the community. If there would be a need in the future to consider other offences that should be covered by this legislation, the bill has a provision that gives the government the authority to make changes to eligibility criteria in regulation, thereby removing the need to amend the act for the said adjustment.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, it is great to know that there will be no direct financial implications to the government to implement these changes to the Vital Statistics Act. The utmost duty of our government is to protect citizens and strengthen public safety for all Albertans. The changes in this bill are another step to ensure the government is taking actions to help protect families and support survivors that are facing trauma. The government does not want the public to feel that their child or loved ones are not in a safe environment or ever feel that their safety is in danger when Albertans are at work and children are at school.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone in this Chamber to support the bill and support all individuals that are dealing with these challenges in the families that are affected. Again, I applaud the minister and all the staff and team members that have been involved in the crafting of these proposed changes that will ensure the protection of Albertans and will ensure that our vulnerable population is supported.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Children's Services has risen to provide a brief question or comment.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated the comments by the member, and I do feel very passionately about this bill, especially after hearing the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford saying that it's really not going to be that helpful but that he's going to vote for it anyways. I would beg to disagree, given that before this bill was introduced in the House, part of my work, part of our portfolio, is to work with child advocacy centres across the province. I called each and every child advocacy centre and heard loud and clear that they truly believe that this is an important piece of

legislation that would make a difference for kids and families who have suffered things that many people would find unimaginable in this province. Cheryl Diebel, the CEO of Zebra Child Protection Centre, did say that this exact thing happened not long ago here in Edmonton. She was surprised to learn about this back in February. So, you know, I was surprised to hear the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford say that this would not do anything helpful when other experts in this area feel the opposite.

Then to hear the Member for Calgary-East just talk about how important this bill will be, talk about service to community, talk about protecting citizens, their public safety, supporting families, families who are facing unimaginable trauma – I just want to ask the member: what types of things have you heard from your constituents in Calgary-East about this bill in particular?

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate?

**Ms Ganley:** Sorry. Are we still under 29(2)(a)?

**The Speaker:** We are. There are approximately three minutes. It appears that there are no other takers.

I'm happy to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. However, there are only approximately seven minutes remaining before 6 o'clock.

**Ms Ganley:** That is fair, Mr. Speaker. I will attempt to make my comments brief. I think that in terms of this specific bill, certainly we're in support. It does, in my view, move forward something. I mean, presently it's the case that the registrar is perfectly able to deny a name change under these circumstances. I would be surprised to hear that a government employee would not deny the name change under such circumstances, but if the members opposite are claiming that that is the case, then this will potentially move us forward.

Certainly, I appreciate the comments from the members opposite around that if this saves even one child, it's important, and I don't disagree. I think that if it saves even one child, it is important, and that's why we will support it. But I also think: let's see what we can do to save more than one. You know, I think this is definitely a step forward, but I think there are a lot of other steps forward that are possible. I think, for instance, you know, there are a number of steps around one of the things. I had the opportunity, when we were in government, to consult, to speak to a number of stakeholders on this file.

I do want to take a moment to thank in particular the officers, the police officers throughout the province who work in this type of area. In particular, the Alberta law enforcement response team, ALERT, has an ICE unit, that does this work almost exclusively. The work they do is amazing. They work incredibly hard. I'd also like to take a moment to thank folks from the Zebra Child Protection Centre and other child protection centres – there are many throughout the province – for the amazing work that they do with survivors on this issue.

This is obviously a very serious issue. I think there are a number of things we can do to move forward, but one of the things I was interested to learn is that one of the big challenges with this area of law and policing is victims coming forward and reporting in the first place, especially when you're dealing with children. One of the things that is incredibly protective to children in terms of enabling them to come forward is knowing the anatomically correct names for the parts of their bodies. That is something that I think ought to be considered as we move forward with curriculum review. Certainly, there was a curriculum review that was being rolled out that was paused. I don't actually know what's become of that, but knowing that that is an incredibly important protective factor in terms of children reporting when this sort of thing happens to them, I think that that is certainly another very important step and is an important step that doesn't even require the government to spend money. It's simply an alteration to the curriculum. I think that that is a big, big step forward.

I would also like to point out that, you know, the same day that this was coming in, we had survivors of violence, not children, stand with us to question the changes being made in Bill 16, which removes financial benefits for victims of crime. I think that's a big concern as well. Certainly, we should take steps to prevent this from happening. That is absolutely the best case scenario, but we also need to take steps to support survivors in coming forward, to support survivors who have experienced this sort of violence as they move forward in their journey and to support them in court. Certainly, one of the things that victims' advocates have been asking for is for the government to use more of the victims of crime fund to buy additional screens. Our government did that, but even more screens would be useful to protect witnesses when they're testifying in court.

There are a number of additional steps that can be taken. I think that this is important, but I think that there are definitely other steps that can be taken as well, and I hope to see this government come forward and take those steps. I hope that they will be willing to do the things that are necessary even if they perhaps conflict with their ideology with respect to curriculum. I hope that they're willing to make investments in addition to making these sorts of changes. I think that this is an area on which a lot of progress can be made.

Certainly, with respect to how we handle survivors, how we handle court proceedings, how we handle a number of things, these are incredibly, incredibly challenging cases. I think we've moved forward a lot in the province over the last decade, but I think that there is definitely more work to do, and I hope to see more pieces come forward that will do this work.

Again, we will be supporting this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 3(1) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

## Table of Contents

Prayers .....	1749
Introduction of Guests .....	1749
Members' Statements	
Health Care System .....	1749
Indigenous Participation in Energy Development .....	1749
Victims of Crime Fund .....	1749
Government Policies .....	1750
Policing.....	1750
PDD Direct Operations.....	1750
Bill 1 and Lawful Protests .....	1751
Oil and Gas Transportation.....	1751
Fair Deal Panel Report .....	1751
Oral Question Period	
Corporate Taxation and Job Creation .....	1752
Health Care System .....	1752
Premier's Speech Writer's Remarks on Residential Schools.....	1753
Keystone XL Pipeline Project .....	1753
Economic Recovery.....	1754
Canada Pension Plan .....	1754
Coal Development Policies .....	1755
Bill 30.....	1756
Technology Industry Development .....	1756
Election Financing.....	1757
Economic Recovery and Job Creation.....	1757
COVID-19 Outbreak at the Misericordia Hospital .....	1758
Anti-Asian Racism .....	1759
Cultural Activities .....	1759
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 31   Environmental Protection Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 .....	1760
Bill 32   Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act .....	1760
Bill 33   Alberta Investment Attraction Act.....	1760
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	1761
Orders of the Day .....	1764
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 26   Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020.....	1764
Bill 27   Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020 .....	1772
Bill 28   Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020.....	1779

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