



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, July 8, 2020

Day 41

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

### The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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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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Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
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)

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

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Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dang  
Horner  
Irwin  
Reid  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee**

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Horner

Allard  
Ceci  
Dang  
Goodridge  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Smith  
Sweet

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Yao

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

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Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Ganley  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
Walker  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Issik  
Jones  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

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Dach  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Reid  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee**

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Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

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Gray  
Hoffman  
Long  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Shepherd  
Turton

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Rosin  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please join me in welcoming guests to the Assembly this afternoon. In the Speaker's gallery are guests of the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville: the member's daughter and son, Jacklyn and Joey Homeniuk, and his partner Caitlin Meneses. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. They are Vincent Chahley and Aaron Schooler. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Government Achievements

**Mr. Loewen:** Since elected, this government has taken action on 60 per cent of our 375 commitments to Albertans. Here is a quick list of some of the things accomplished in just 15 months: repealed the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, the NDP's job-killing carbon tax; reduced the corporate tax rate to 8 per cent to attract investment; lifted barriers to job creators; restored mandatory secret ballots for union certification; created the red tape reduction ministry; stood up for Alberta's oil and gas industry by fighting for all pipelines; penalties for obstructing critical infrastructure through unlawful protest but not taking away the right to protest; challenged the Liberal Bill C-69; beat the Trudeau carbon tax in the provincial Court of Appeal; secured funds for energy industry reclamation work; maintained or increased spending in Health, Education, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, and Seniors and Housing, and focused on putting those funds where they were most needed; invested in confronting addictions and mental health; strengthened Alberta's legacy of school choice; audited Alberta Health Services for the first time ever; changed fishing regulations that Albertans have requested for years; caribou task forces to involve communities and industry in developing plans to protect jobs and wildlife; increased the victims of crime fund by 50 per cent and expanded the scope so that it could be used for crime prevention also; created the Alberta parole board; multiple rural crime reduction initiatives; additional tools to prevent domestic violence; protection for survivors of human trafficking; created the Fair Deal Panel and started implementing recommendations; created the TIER system to actually reduce emissions; have Premiers across Canada onside with utility corridors and fiscal stabilization funds for Alberta; reintroduced Senate nominee elections; created the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation to support major resource development projects; replaced the NDP's failed Bill 6 for Alberta's agriculture sector; handled COVID with among the least amount of restrictions in the free world – our response hasn't been perfect, but we have done our best to balance both health and our economy – multiple programs for both individuals and businesses to help them through the COVID pandemic. Our economic recovery program includes a \$10 billion investment in infrastructure to create jobs because we believe it is better to create jobs and improve infrastructure, putting Albertans to work instead of giving handouts.

These are just a few of the many actions this government has pursued to make life better for Albertans. Thank you.

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

### Calgary Office Vacancy Rate

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last election the UCP promised to fill the office towers in Calgary. They also claimed their \$4.7 billion corporate handout would fill those towers by bringing jobs and investment to the province, and to pay for it, they cancelled programs that were helping diversify our economy. But as we've seen, the economic illiteracy has been a disaster for our province. Fifty thousand jobs have been lost since they handed over this money. The economy has shrunk .6 per cent, the second-worst in the country. Investments in our province dropped to the lowest level, not seen since the financial crisis over 10 years ago, and the office towers in Calgary emptied out. Companies laid off hundreds of staff, moved their headquarters out of province, or bypassed Alberta altogether. By the end of last year the office vacancy rate sat at 24 per cent in Calgary, with some buildings sitting completely empty, and all of this was before the pandemic hit our province.

Now the UCP government has presented their so-called recovery plan, but it turns out this is just a doubling down of their failed policies like their \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout.

Well, the reviews of the UCP's so-called plan are in, and they aren't good. One economist said, quote, I feel like I was watching a rerun; it's not bold; it's not ambitious; it's none of those things; it's tired; it's played; it's old; it's unimaginative; it's continuing to play the same songs over and over again.

One commentator described it as a race to the bottom and wrote that according to the experts he spoke to, quote, Alberta's hurry-up corporate tax cut is less an investment in the future than a gift to the biggest current players. End quote. And Fitch Ratings took one look at the UCP's plan and immediately downgraded the province's credit rating.

Mr. Speaker, instead of doubling down on these outdated and failed policies, we need a government with a bold vision and a real plan that gets Calgarians back to work, sets Alberta's economy up for recovery.

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

### Agriculture in Southern Alberta Highway 3 Capital Plan

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's agrifood industry plays an important role in our province's economy. In fact, it's about 20 per cent of Alberta's GDP. Last week I had an opportunity to humblebrag about the agricultural investment and private-sector innovation taking place in southeastern Alberta. The Premier and I had a day full of learning about everything from cucumbers to cogenerators to canola to the next generation of advocates. We started at Big Marble Farms, the largest year-round greenhouse operation in Alberta, and then rounded up our trip at the Neubauer family farm, who recently celebrated their 110th birthday. Both of these operations, although occupying completely different spaces in the ag industry, exemplify the true get 'er done attitude of Albertans and the strength of rural Alberta families to overcome, to innovate, and thrive no matter the conditions.

I'm so proud of our agricultural producers in southern Alberta. They not only put their hearts and souls into their craft but they also make meaningful contributions to the communities in which they live. By continually adapting and reimagining how to best interact

with the environment, Alberta's producers are leaders in effective land management strategies and environmental stewardship. Whether it's using natural gas cogenerators, hydroponics to maximize production per acre and conserve water, or sustaining arable land and protecting honeybee health through mixed farming, our southern Alberta producers are leaders.

It's important to note that our agriculture sector would go nowhere, literally, without reliable transportation networks, and I was delighted when the Transportation minister announced the twinning of highway 3 between Taber and Burdett just a few days ago, although I almost didn't recognize him without that signature lip sweater, Mr. Speaker. But at any rate, this important infrastructure project means that southern Alberta producers will be able to get their goods to market more efficiently and safely. The highway 1 and highway 3 interchange rehabilitation project in Medicine Hat, announced back in May, will also go a long way in supporting the transportation network for Alberta's farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that honours and supports and rewards hard work and the dedication of southeastern Albertans like the ones that I represent.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader has a statement to make.

### Government Policies

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a mere three years since it was formed, the UCP has earned a legacy of corruption and undemocratic behaviour, including allegations of bribery and fraud, phony kamikaze campaigns, and RCMP investigations into voter fraud. It is known that senior members of this Premier's office were involved in creating and running the kamikaze campaign to attack his chief leadership rival. It is also known that the Election Commissioner issued over \$200,000 in fines in his investigation of the UCP leadership before this government fired him. And now the UCP says: trust us with elections. Trust them while they're bringing big money back to politics, opening the gates for dark money, rolling back accountability and transparency, and giving the Premier all the power when it comes to referenda.

All this while the UCP voted down our attempt to stand up for a united Canada and to reject the separatists we hear coming from the UCP backbench. UCP MLAs have insisted that separation needs to be on the provincial agenda. UCP MLAs have called our fellow Canadians "hostile, parasitic partners" and called the Canadian Federation: a rigged game.

The UCP will continue to stand beside their separatist base simply to distract Albertans from the failed policy of their \$4.7 billion corporate handout and its broken promise to diversify the economy, create jobs, or build pipelines. And since it's clear that this government is completely out of ideas on how to create jobs, they will continue to try to distract Albertans by playing games with our democracy and elections while telling Albertans to trust them.

But, Mr. Speaker, Albertans see through these games and see the UCP's record of fired commissioners, voter fraud investigations, and kamikaze campaigns clear as day. That is a record that Albertans will never trust.

1:40

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

### Transportation Capital Projects

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to remark on our government's historic investment in roads and highways. As part of our economic recovery plan our government is committing hundreds of millions of dollars to renew Alberta's aging transportation infrastructure. Roads and highways in desperate need of repairs and upgrades are finally getting the attention they deserve after four years of NDP neglect. This investment is creating badly needed jobs and improving safety for Alberta motorists, but the benefits don't end there. This investment is about building for our future.

As Albertans begin emerging from the economic catastrophe that was brought on by COVID-19 and low oil prices, businesses and individuals are rethinking what our economic future looks like. One thing that seems likely is that we will begin to see a dramatic rise in remote working and telecommuting. Technology has made it easier than ever, and this pandemic has shown that it is both possible and beneficial.

If that does become our new normal, I expect that a great many people will look at relocating to our amazing small communities that offer lower house costs, lower taxes, and room to grow. This represents an incredible opportunity for our small and medium-sized cities if we make smart investments now. Yes, we need to be investing in Internet and telecommunications, but we also need to connect rural and medium-sized cities to our larger population centres. If we are going to have people living and working in rural Alberta, we need to show that they can still access things like major hospitals and international airports when necessary, and that means that we need highways, Mr. Speaker.

Safe and well-maintained roads and highways are vital to the health of our rural communities, communities that are going to play an important role in our provincial recovery. This historic investment by our Minister of Transportation recognizes that fact and literally paves the way for our province's future.

### High School Capacity in Edmonton-Meadows

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, today I'm rising in this House again to highlight the crucial need for a high school and the issue of lack of funding for the construction of this high school in my riding of Edmonton-Meadows. The parents and students in my riding are consistently demanding a high school in Edmonton-Meadows. The Edmonton public school board has confirmed that they expect the existing high school's capacity to be full by 2022, and the construction of this high school in Meadows will alleviate some of the pressure by improving high school capacity by adding an initial capacity of 1,800 students into it.

I would also like to remind this Assembly that construction of this high school in Edmonton-Meadows was one of the top priorities in the previous capital plans and has been moved up and ranked as the very first priority in the most recent three-year capital plan of 2021-2024 put forward by the Edmonton public school board.

Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge the fact that last year, on November 1, 2019, the design pending for the Meadows high school was approved, but this is not enough. The building cost for this high school is estimated at \$79 million by the Edmonton public school board, which is way far away from what was allocated. But the recent announcement made by the government to spend \$10 billion in infrastructure funding: I would take this moment to remind this UCP government that funding public education was also in their platform that they ran on, and constituents of Edmonton-Meadows voted for it.

I hope this government will listen to thousands of concerned parents and students living in Edmonton-Meadows and will approve, allocate, and announce the full construction funding to build this high school as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Cycling Safety

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public safety is one of the fundamental responsibilities of government. Even though the federal government has jurisdiction over many aspects of ensuring safety for our country, the provincial government plays a supremely important role in public safety. We regulate traffic.

In 2017 there were 290 people killed in traffic collisions here in Alberta. This was down from years before. That same year in Canada there were 1,856 fatalities.

Most people probably think of multiple vehicles at high speeds. Today, though, I want to focus on cyclists. Every year an average of 74 Canadians die cycling. Seventy three per cent of these deaths are because of collisions with vehicles.

Recently it was Cory Meza, an elite Calgary cyclist, who died in a collision with a vehicle at 50th Avenue and Macleod Trail in Calgary. He is one of 74 that die every single year.

Today I will table a petition, with 500 signatures, seeking an amendment to the Traffic Safety Act. It likely would have been more signatures, but they were interrupted in the middle of collecting by COVID-19. This petition seeks three changes to the Traffic Safety Act. The first is a required safe passing distance of one metre at speeds equal to or less than 60 kilometres per hour and a safe passing distance of one and a half metres at speeds greater than 60 kilometres per hour. Secondly, the petitioners seek to allow two abreast riding when it will not impede the flow of traffic. Lastly, they wish to require cyclists to ride as far to the right as is safe.

Safety: that is what all 500 Albertans who signed the petition want, safety so that they can enjoy a sport they love without losing 74 of their fellow riders every year.

### Bill 32

**Ms Gray:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to hand it to this government: they're nothing if not consistent. When they first came to power, the UCP had a plan that they said would create jobs, grow the economy by giving massive corporate giveaways and by helping big firms pick the pockets of ordinary working Albertans. And a year later, when their plan has proven to be a complete and total failure, what did this government decide to do? Why, more of the same, of course. The UCP are strong believers in doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. They've sped up their corporate tax giveaways, which continue to create no jobs, and now with Bill 32 they are back finding more ways to pick the pockets of hard-working Albertans.

Bill 32 sees the UCP once again fishing in their favourite pond, the wallets of working Albertans. Bill 32 attempts to further enrich large and profitable corporations by again attacking working Albertans' rights when it comes to various rules around their overtime pay. Strangely, for a government that supposedly wants to increase the number of employed Albertans, the UCP keeps striving to make it so companies can get more work out of fewer staff with as little cost to employers for overtime as possible.

This legislation is not about restoring balance; it's about stacking the deck against workers. And while that would be bad enough, Bill 32's assault on Albertans' overtime protections is only the tip of the

iceberg. This bill attacks the rights of working Albertans on a number of fronts, many of which will one day be overturned as unconstitutional by the courts. But I guess it should come as no surprise that a government which recently refused to support a motion denouncing separatism sees no need to write laws that adhere to the Constitution of Canada. [interjections] In fact, Bill 32, like Bill 30 before it, seems to be about bringing American-style laws to Alberta, American-style private health care, American-style antiworker, antiunion labour laws.

Make no mistake. We in the Alberta NDP Official Opposition will fight against the proposed changes in these bills with everything we can. Alberta's workers deserve a government that stands up for them, but they don't currently have one. Bill 32 makes life worse for every single working Albertan and should be withdrawn.

**The Speaker:** Just a reminder to government members that they will know the long-standing tradition of allowing members to provide a member's statement of two minutes of uninterrupted opportunity.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Economic Recovery

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been hit with multiple major challenges over the last couple of months, the most devastating being the COVID-19 outbreak, which ground most economic activity to a halt, forced thousands of businesses to close, and threw tens of thousands of Albertans off work. This is a truly devastating time for the people of the province, but Albertans are a resilient group. We fight when times are tough, and even in dire situations like this, we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Our economic recovery plan will help our province get back on its feet, create jobs, and keep Albertans safe. We have already implemented an abundance of support programs and funding increases such as an additional \$500 million to aid our health care system, \$53 million in mental health supports, WCB deferrals for businesses, utility deferrals for all Albertans, and so much more. Our government will now be accelerating the job-creation tax cut by a year and a half, create a new agency to showcase Alberta as a destination for business from across the world, and invest in new infrastructure to create jobs right away.

Mr. Speaker, with a business tax rate of just 8 per cent Alberta will be one of the lowest taxed jurisdictions in North America. This will incentivize job growth and allow business to expand or set up shop for the first time in our province. With thousands of my constituents out of work, it is more crucial than ever that they have a government that will fight for them and bring jobs back to the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### Invest Alberta Corporation and Job Creation

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was hopeful we would finally see a plan from this government to create jobs. Instead, we saw the minister of economic development announce that she would hire someone to do her job. This new agency's impact and relevance to job creation is fake. Its stated goal is to do the work the minister should have been doing all along. Fifty

thousand Albertans lost their jobs before the pandemic; hundreds of thousands more have lost their jobs since then. Why won't this Premier admit he has absolutely no plan to create jobs for Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we recall what the NDP minister of economic development and trade did: helped to drive this province into the worst job crisis in its modern history pre-COVID. We have launched Alberta's recovery plan, a bold, ambitious plan to build, to diversify, and to create jobs, one element of which is the largest infrastructure build in our history to create 50,000 jobs in the immediate term while improving our long-term productivity; also, to create 55,000 jobs with the most attractive tax rates for job creators and investors in North America, plus sector strategies to diversify our economy. We're proud of the plan.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, instead of creating jobs, this government handed a \$4.7 billion handout to profitable corporations and then proceeded to lose 55,000 jobs. Now they've invented a new excuse for UCP insiders to wine and dine their way across the globe at taxpayers' expense, this on the same day that they announced plans to pull a bare minimum of \$100 million out of the pockets of working families. Picking the pockets of Albertans to pay for handouts for profitable corporations and UCP insiders doesn't create jobs. Why won't this Premier introduce a real jobs plan for Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, the NDP didn't pick anyone's pocket. They robbed Albertans in broad daylight with their carbon tax, the single biggest tax hike in Alberta history, which they – what's a parliamentary term, Mr. Speaker? – misled, deceived Albertans about in the 2015 election. The biggest problem in the economy under the NDP was that they drove tens of billions of dollars of investment out of this province in part by raising business taxes by 20 per cent. That's why we're setting up invest Alberta, to go out there and promote this as the best place in North America in which to invest and create jobs.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's lovely, but all this phony agency actually does is camouflage the minister's failures and conceal the expenses of UCP insiders. The Premier sent David Knight Legg to run up \$100,000 in luxury travel expenses, and he came back empty-handed, but with this new agency these kinds of expenses will now be hidden from Albertans. Fifty thousand Albertans lost their jobs before the pandemic under this Premier's watch because of his corporate handout. There have been hundreds of thousands more. When will you finally start standing up for Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, that's the first time I've ever heard economy in WestJet described as luxury travel. It's a great airline. I am proud that this government attracted somebody of Dr. Knight Legg's calibre, a PhD from Yale, a JD from Oxford who helped to lead global companies, to use his global network to put Alberta back on the map amongst investors who had lost confidence because of the NDP. That's why we are creating invest Alberta. That's why we are implementing, on an accelerated basis, the job-creation tax cut. It's why we're cutting red tape. They don't like it because their answer is higher taxes and more red tape to kill more jobs.

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

## Bill 32

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, 55,000 jobs lost, and the Premier's answer was to raise income taxes and property taxes and fees on every single Alberta worker to pay for his \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Now with Bill 32 he's helping the boss get their hand into Alberta's workers' pockets again in dozens of different ways, at least \$100 million that families rely on to pay the mortgage, to pay for the kids' clothes, and to pay their skyrocketing property taxes. It's all now going to lie in the pockets of shareholders. Why is this Premier so determined to push Alberta workers into poverty?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, under the NDP we saw the worst economic record, the worst jobs record of any government in modern Alberta history. We saw the number of Albertans living in poverty increase. We saw, for the first time in our modern history, negative net population growth to this province under the NDP. She's talking now about skyrocketing property taxes. Maybe she and her friend the worst Finance minister in Alberta history over there, from Calgary, could talk to their NDP friends on city councils and tell them to stop raising property taxes.

**Member Ceci:** Twenty-five billion.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo will come to order when the Speaker is in a . . .

**Member Ceci:** Twenty-five.

**The Speaker:** Order. Everyone can hear you say 25. No one wants to hear that, particularly the Speaker.

The hon. the Official Opposition leader has the call.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, essential workers – that's what we're talking about right now, not name-calling – in Alberta have been going flat out for months. They saved lives. Now, if they don't want to work overtime without being paid the overtime rate, the Premier is making it easier for them to be fired. He's even given the bosses longer to pay out wages once they fire workers. These hard-working Albertans were here for us when we needed them most. Why is this Premier turning his back on these workers, the very ones he called heroes just a few weeks ago? How hypocritical can he be in one given day?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, our focus is on restoring balance to Alberta's labour laws, reducing red tape, and getting Albertans back to work. This is what we were elected to do. We started this with Bill 2, and we're continuing it with Bill 32. Unlike the NDP, who passed labour legislation that swung the pendulum significantly to the union side and also added costs for employers, driving investment out of this province and reducing jobs, Bill 32 will create jobs, will reduce costs. We have the backs of Albertans. We have the backs of Albertan workers.

**Ms Notley:** Well, to the Premier. Maybe we can get someone to deal with the question at hand. Now, while other provincial governments are actually focused on paid sick leave to support struggling families and prevent the spread of disease, this Premier is doing the opposite. He's taking at least \$100 million out of the pockets of truckers, grocery store workers, health care aides, and all the Albertans who kept us safe through the pandemic. They are essential workers, not exploitable workers. It's disgraceful. When will this Premier, not his minister but the Premier, realize that attacking vulnerable workers is not an economic strategy? It's cruel.



**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, nothing can be further from the truth. The hon. member opposite keeps talking about this \$100 million figure, that we are picking the pockets. We are not doing this. This \$100 million in savings is administrative savings. The termination benefits that employees are entitled to: they will continue to get the same termination benefits. The \$100 million in savings is associated with making those termination payments on a regular payroll cycle as opposed to three days. The NDP, as usual, has got this wrong. We need to correct the record. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

**Ms Notley:** The only thing wrong, Mr. Speaker, is that I suspect it's not \$100 million; it's probably five or six times that.

### Bill 32 Labour Relations Code Amendments

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, the Premier's first act of this sitting was to restrict Albertans' freedoms of speech and assembly. He's heading to court over that, one of three constitutional challenges he's triggered so far this year. Now with Bill 32 and its attempt to limit the rights of Alberta workers to express their opinions, protect their rights at work, join a union, or walk a picket line, this Premier is headed to court for constitutional challenge numbers 4, 5, 6, et cetera, all this in just over a year. It is unprecedented. Why does this Premier keep trampling on the constitutional freedoms of Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the reason I invited the minister of labour to respond to the earlier questions is that I had no idea what she was talking about. I mean, they make stuff up that is so crazy, so completely unrelated to reality. I don't even understand the bizarre allegations they're making.

With respect to the most recent labour legislation, we are keeping a platform commitment to allow hard-working Albertans to decide whether or not their money is going to be used in political campaigns attacking their own interests. Unifor, that spends millions of dollars of dues from Alberta workers to campaign against pipelines: now those workers will be able to stop it.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that's not true, and the UCP needs to stop lying about that. Now, I know the Premier hates this, but the Constitution of Canada protects the rights of Canadians to form and join unions. Those rights exist because individual workers are vulnerable to exploitation, to having their pay stolen, and being forced to work in unsafe conditions like we've seen. The Supreme Court of Canada understands that and has upheld these rights again and again. [interjections] Why is the Premier so hostile to the idea that Albertans have a right to organize themselves, protect themselves, and bargain for a safe workplace?

**The Speaker:** While I appreciate the interjections from this side of the House, I would certainly find that to be unparliamentary if they were on the record.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, this government respects collective bargaining rights. That's clear in the legislation. But there is no right for Jerry Dias, her NDP fellow-traveller, to, to coin a phrase, pick the pockets of union members in Alberta, to run campaigns against pipelines, attacking their jobs. You know what? We are asserting here a right for Alberta union members to stand up for their way of life, for their jobs, for the largest industry in this

province by withholding those dues voluntarily from Jerry Dias and the rest of them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I travelled across the country defending the need for pipelines. I did so with members of the UCP – not the UCP; God knows they were too busy picking fights with people. No. With Unifor members, with steel members, with building trades members. I did that to defend the pipeline. I also know full well what this Premier knows, that this bill goes much farther. It's not about political expression. It's about killing unions, attacking unions, busting unions, and picking on the rights of individual workers. Why do you want to attack workers so much?

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier has risen, but I will note a point of order at 2:02 prior to doing so.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, what we want to do, what we promised to do, what we are doing is to empower union members to determine whether or not their dues will be used to engage in political campaigns. Could you imagine being a Jewish union member in Alberta and seeing unions use your dues to call Israel a genocidal state? Could you imagine being a refugee from Venezuela and ... [interjections] Oh, listen to her.

**The Speaker:** Order in the House. Order. Order. [interjections] The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West will come to order.

The Premier has 10 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Kenney:** They don't like the truth, Mr. Speaker. They don't ... [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. [interjections] Order.

**Mr. Kenney:** Can you imagine being a union member, a refugee from Venezuela being forced to finance pro-socialist campaigns for Venezuela? Can you imagine being a Unifor member being forced to finance campaigns to attack the pipelines? We'll give those members a voice, Mr. Speaker.

### Bill 32 Employment Standards Code Amendments

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, essential workers have proven to be the modern-day heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic. They deserve our respect and thanks. But what do they get from this Premier? A piece of legislation that makes it so that they can be terminated with no notice. Now they may have to wait up to a month for their own money, that they are owed, to be paid out. Workers are hurting during this pandemic. Families are hurting during this pandemic. To the Premier. This might be the most cruel act to date. Why does your government hate Alberta's heroes? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo will come to order.

I do use caution to the hon. member when making a statement like: why does your government hate? It's quite likely to create disorder. I encourage you to govern yourself accordingly in the future.

The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our focus is getting Albertans back to work. We have the backs of Albertans, and we

respect the tremendous job that the essential workers, including our health care workers, are doing right now during these trying times. We have made some changes to the termination rules, but we're not reducing the individual termination benefits. We have made some changes to the rules in regard to temporary layoffs, extending the period from 60 to 90 days within 120-day periods, so they can be attached to their jobs longer. We have the backs of Albertans, and we have the backs of Albertan workers.

**Ms Gray:** No, this minister does not. I'm worried he doesn't even understand what's happening. These workers who are terminated in the middle of a pandemic, instead of waiting three days for their money while they're worried about buying food for their families, will have to wait a full pay period for reasons of better aligning for employers, to save employers money? We are talking about workers being fired, waiting a month for their money in a pandemic. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. If the Leader of the Opposition would like to ask questions, she has lots of opportunity to do so. I encourage her to let her colleagues do so when she's allowed them to.

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We are making a whole host of changes through Bill 32 to be able to provide flexibility for employers so that they enable savings through red tape reduction so that they can continue to employ Albertans and hire Albertans back. We are focused on getting Albertans their jobs back. The termination benefits that they mentioned are not being reduced. They may be delayed by a few more days or to the next pay period, but that will save \$100 million, and employers can use that to be able to hold on to employees.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, it is the truth that it will now take longer for workers to get their own money after they have been terminated in a pandemic. This government and its priorities are on clear display. The minister just bragged about saving employers \$100 million. That is money workers are owed. This minister and this government will not talk to the hero workers that they praise, so to the Premier. I intend to bring some of these working heroes to our Legislature in the days ahead. Will you sit down with them, will you hear about the pain and suffering you are causing, or does your government not have interest?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once again provide the answer that I provided earlier. The \$100 million figure isn't being taken out of the pockets of employees. The individual termination benefits remain same. We have not changed that at all. We've just simply changed the timing. What's important here is that that \$100 million can stay in the pockets of employers so they can continue to employ Albertans because it's the job creators that create the jobs in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to speak to anyone who has concerns. My door is always open.

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

### Bill 32 Labour Relations Code Amendments (continued)

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government campaigned on a platform to bring back democracy and balance to Alberta's workplaces and to protect workers from having their employers spend their hard-earned money on ideological political causes that they don't even agree with. In my opinion, workers should never be forced to unwillingly, without consent fund

political endeavours without their explicit opt-in approval. That is not democracy. To the Premier: how will Bill 32 protect the money and democratic rights of individuals working in Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, could you imagine being a Jewish member of CUPW and being forced through your dues to finance a campaign to boycott and divest from Israel, a union that refers to it as a genocidal state? Could you imagine being a refugee from the Venezuelan socialist dictatorship being forced through your dues to CUPE to affirm, to support the Venezuelan regime of Mr. Maduro? Could you imagine being a pipeline worker here in Alberta being forced through Unifor and through the AFL to finance campaigns to shut down pipelines? It's wrong, and now those union members will have a choice to say so.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. Well, direct representation based on the actual votes from members is the most democratic way to decide what voters would like and would not like, but given that the NDP and their union bosses are falsely claiming that they're restoring mandatory votes and opt-in permissions to workers and that Bill 32 could somehow limit the ability of unions to represent and advocate for what their workers want, to the Premier or to the Minister of Labour and Immigration: can you please elaborate on just who and what this opt-in clause for Bill 32 will protect?

2:10

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the member is referring in part to the restoration of workplace democracy through Bill 2, introduced by this government, which now once again requires mandatory secret ballots before a union can be certified in a workplace. The NDP opposed that democracy. They wanted to leave those members open to intimidation and even harassment if they did not support certification. This isn't the New Democratic Party; it's the Old Antidemocratic Party. They're against referendums, they're against citizen initiative . . .

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . they're against recall, they're against secret-ballot voting, and they're against letting members decide what to do with their dues.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order has been noted at 2:10.

The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has the call.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the Premier. Well, given that unions, who are supposed to represent their members and who are funded by the salaries and mandatory contributions of their members, should be accountable to their members and given that in almost every other province unions are required to provide financial statements to their members so those workers know how and where their hard-earned money is being spent, to the Premier: how does Bill 32 promote transparency, democracy, and fiscal responsibility in the workplace?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it does so in part by giving ordinary union members the right and the ability and the power to decide whether or not their dues will be used to finance certain campaigns. I know a lot of refugees from the Venezuelan dictatorship. I know one who works, who is a member of a union. By force of law he is required through his dues to finance political campaigns from

CUPE to support the dictatorship that he fled. I know why the NDP is upset. They've got members of their caucus that support that dictatorship, but that Venezuelan refugee should not be forced to.

### Bill 32 and Youth Employment Standards

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, quote: we fully expect parents to be involved with their kids in terms of, you know, where they are working and what they can do, so we'll be able to manage it that way, through inspections and through complaints. That's the minister of labour justifying his move to open Alberta floodgates to the type of work kids as young as 13 can do. Parents are busy, and they have jobs of their own. Employers and this minister are responsible for keeping workers safe. Minister, why are you always passing the buck?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, I am confused by the question, and the reason I am confused by the question, quite simply, is that the change that we've made in the regulation is quite simple. We simply codified what already existed: 13- and 14-year-olds already can work. All we simply did was take what was being done by permit not only under our government but under that government, working in the hospitality industry, and put it into regulation to make it easier for 13-, 14-year-olds to have work, should they wish, because we support Albertans.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that it should not be a youth worker as young as 13 to challenge unsafe workplaces and given that those that could face termination or become engaged in a war of words with an adult in a position of power and given that what this minister calls red tape in this regard, I call basic workplace safety rules that are designed to keep kids safe and keep them alive in some circumstances, to the minister: is helping your corporate buddies make a couple of extra bucks really worth putting Alberta's youth in grave danger?

**Mr. Copping:** Mr. Speaker, we're supporting Alberta's youth, but apparently that party doesn't want to do that. Occupational health and safety rules remain the same. All the requirements that used to be in the permit are maintained in the regulation. Youth of 13 and 14 who work in the restaurants have to be under the guidance of someone who is 18, and we fully expect our ongoing health and safety officers and our employment inspectors to be out there ensuring that our youth are working safely. We are supporting our youth, unlike the NDP, who aren't doing that. This is not a significant change.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Given that Albertans I've heard from are mortified with the changes that this government is setting up for youth labour and given that I feel the repercussions could be deadly, to the minister. You can no longer track where these kids are, what they're doing for work, and what unsafe conditions they're being exposed to. How on earth are you going to keep them safe? Be specific, Minister. Pleasantries and corporate peddling won't cut it this time. [interjections]

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there's a big difference between this side of the House and that side of the House. On this side of the House we support job creators, and we support people who want to get jobs. That side of the House: apparently, they don't support that. We have a very different philosophy. We believe that the vast, vast majority of employers want to keep their

employees safe, and they want them to work. They want to train them, and they have an investment in them. That side apparently doesn't. We have mechanisms in place to keep workers safe. Occupational health and safety rules continue to exist, with inspections done through employment officers. We'll ensure that continues to happen.

### Texas Agent General Appointment

**Ms Phillips:** There is no jobs plan for Albertans, but there is a jobs plan for the Premier's friend. The friend that the Premier just gave a quarter-of-a-million-dollar job to is unqualified for his role in Houston. He has never had an oil and gas investment attraction job. He has no proven record in the oil and gas sector. If oil and gas jobs are actually important, the appointment of an unqualified person to Houston shows that cronyism is more important. Why is this Premier's cronyism making his friends rich but making Albertans looking for jobs in the oil and gas sector so much poorer?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous question from the opposition Finance critic. If that's the best the opposition Finance critic can come up with, no wonder the NDP is doing so badly across this province. Mr. Rodney is more than qualified. He served for a long time inside this Chamber both as an MLA and as a cabinet minister. This cronyism argument is ridiculous. The current Premier has appointed even leaders of opponent political parties, including the Alberta Party, to the Alberta Health Services board, another former leader of the Alberta Party, Mr. Greg Clark, to the electricity side of things. There is a well-balanced approach to appointments with this government.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that the Premier won't fully fund the health care system during a pandemic and given that there are no supports for small businesses in crisis and given that the answer from this Premier about supporting schools and kids and families is, "Oh, we're broke" and given that, despite all of this, the Premier found \$250,000 a year for his friend Dave Rodney, whose most notable career accomplishment is quitting his job to give the Premier his seat, how does the Premier justify a quarter of a million bucks for Dave Rodney but nothing for the people and services who actually matter?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, those of us who have met Dave Rodney over the years also know he climbed Everest, in fact twice. Here is the reality. I will take Dave Rodney down in the States protecting our largest industry and helping create jobs over that former environment minister, who appointed Tzaporah Berman to be able to decide the future of the oil sands in this province. We will not be lectured by that member when it comes to appointments. She continued to put in place extreme environmentalists who were dedicated to destroying our largest industry when she was in power. We will not do that.

**Ms Phillips:** Given that this Finance minister's jobs plan is to give \$4.7 billion away to companies who take their money elsewhere and given that 50,000 jobs have already been lost as a result of this failed UCP jobs plan, is the Finance minister's new jobs plan a \$250,000 reward to an unqualified friend of the Premier and nothing for the hundreds of thousands of Albertans who are actually qualified and who are looking for decent and honest work?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we hear all this rhetoric from the other side. The reality is that we will not be

lectured by an opposition who failed in good times to provide a business environment that was conducive to attracting investment, creating jobs and opportunities for Albertans. In the first two months of 2020 every key piece of economic data demonstrated that our economic plan was working. We will continue to deliver. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. [interjections] Order. Order. You might not like the answer, but the Minister of Finance shouldn't have to yell so I can hear the answer.

The hon. the Minister of Finance has 10 seconds remaining.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ensure we create the most competitive business environment, that will attract investment, create jobs and opportunities for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod now.

## 2:20 Coal Development Policies

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You may be surprised to hear this, but once again the opposition has been sowing the seeds of fear across the province on the issue of the changes the government recently made to the province's outdated coal policy, one which has not been updated since 1976. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has even gone so far as to indicate that the policy change is likely to affect Alberta's drinking water. Can we ask the minister of environment to set the record straight, please?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great question. It is unfortunate to see the NDP continue with their practices of fearmongering, but we know, when it comes to the NDP, they are just the party of fear and smear. Here's the reality, though. All environmental regulations and, for sure, all regulations associated with water remain in place when it comes to any coal development inside the province, and category 1 land, with the headwaters, remains protected from all development, not just coal development. The reality is that the NDP continues to fearmonger. It's disappointing, but we can assure Albertans that our regulatory system remains intact and will continue to operate fully across this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar stood in this very House and claimed that our government only cares about coal miners. Given that coal has helped put food on the table for thousands of Albertan families and that a number of communities have been decimated by the opposition's coal phase-out policy while they were in government, can the same minister explain how revisiting the 1976 coal policy will help create sorely needed jobs for Albertans, like many in my own riding of Livingstone-MacLeod?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw what the NDP did to communities like Hanna. It's disappointing. It's clear that they don't care about coal miners and other people that work in this province. Their former Energy minister once famously told Albertans who were struggling to get work in the energy industry that they should move to B.C. to get work.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Now it appears that the NDP's plan when it comes to metallurgical coal, that produces the steel that the world depends on, is that they're going to tell Alberta workers to go to B.C. to get jobs. Shame on the NDP. Albertans can rest assured that we will develop metallurgical coal to create steel all across this planet. We'll do it in an environmentally friendly way, and we'll get people back to work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:22.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that high-quality metallurgical coal is essential to much of the infrastructure we rely on, including energy infrastructure in oil and gas as well as the steel to make wind turbines and solar panels. We depend on these as a society. Can the environment minister once again explain how the changes the government made to the 1976 coal policy will create certainty for producers who mine this type of essential metallurgical coal?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, bringing the regulatory process in place to help with investors helps to make sure that everybody understands the system going forward, but again the member hits the nail right on the head when it comes to the NDP, who were dedicated to blocking things like pipeline and energy products from leaving our province. Now they appear to be dedicated to stopping metallurgical coal from leaving our province and instead letting B.C. profit from metallurgical coal development or Australia profit from metallurgical coal development. It's disappointing, but Albertans can rest assured that we're going to protect our environment. But we are going to develop our resources because, unlike the NDP, we don't campaign on keeping things in the ground; we campaign on prosperity for this great province.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, a point of order is noted at 2:23.

Now it's time for the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

## Public Health Act Review

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier called for a robust look into the pandemic and created a special committee to look at the Public Health Act to recommend changes in light of the public health emergency. Today, by a decision of UCP members, the important work of that committee will begin in secret and off the record. But during the past few months we've seen failures of government and industry in meat-packing plants and seniors' facilities. Mistakes were made, lives were lost, and we cannot let this happen again. To the Premier: will you, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice, and the minister of labour agree to come and testify before that committee and uphold your duty to be accountable to the people of this province?

**Mr. Shandro:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, we have already taken steps to engage someone to do a full review, as we do after any pandemic response in this province, so that we can update our pandemic plan here in Alberta. The last time it was updated was 2014. That work is going to be done in a separate way. The point of that all-party committee was to review the Public Health Act. That's the point of this committee. We look forward to the NDP to stop playing politics, get to the work that this Legislature has directed them to do, do the work in reviewing the Public Health Act. Stop with the politics.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Health has stated on the record that the government could have done better when it comes to controlling outbreaks at the meat-packing plants and given that he said that – and I quote – we didn't realize right away how complex the risks were for folks at those plants and given that nobody wants another failure of this magnitude, where lives were lost, and given that both industry and government need to work together to keep workers safe, will the Minister of Health support the call of the Official Opposition to have Cargill CEO David MacLennan and JBS Canada president David Colwell come to and testify before the select special committee so that we can prevent another tragedy of this magnitude?

**Mr. Shandro:** It's just like the NDP, Mr. Speaker, to be taking comments out of context and to be continuing to play politics with this issue, playing politics with the response to COVID. The entire world was learning from COVID and how to respond to it, and we, I think, were a model for the rest of the country and for all of North America, for the entire world as our response to the pandemic was, I think, fantastic in the way that we provided the capacity – the workforce capacity, the testing capacity – and the surge funding for AHS and our public health officials to be able to act quickly and respond to keep Albertans safe.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Health has also stated on the record that the government's response to the pandemic in seniors' facilities could have been better and given that the minister has stated that there will be – and I quote – an opportunity to review all continuing care, including how we responded during the pandemic, and given that the failures in long-term care included not only those of government but those by industry and given that lives were lost, families were torn apart, and we cannot let that happen again, will the Minister of Health support our call to compel the CEOs of major seniors' facilities like Revera, Retirement Concepts, and Extendicare to testify before the committee and answer for their actions?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, the all-party select special committee to review the Public Health Act was to review the Public Health Act, not to play politics over COVID, not to play politics over our response to COVID. But as we are talking about continuing care, yes, throughout Canada the mortality rate was, I think, 142 per million in our continuing care facilities; in Alberta, 23 – not 123 but 23 – because our response in this province, working with our independent partners in AHS and Covenant Health, was a model for the entire country. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### **Persons with Disabilities' Workforce Participation**

**Ms Renaud:** Thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs as well as prospects of jobs; 1 in 10 working-age Canadians have disabilities. Disabled Albertans are regularly underemployed, earn minimum wage, and are frequently the first to be let go when companies downsize. Before the pandemic and the world oil price collapse they were already unemployed at higher rates than their nondisabled peers. I've heard the UCP say that the best social program is a job, so to the minister: what is the economic recovery task force doing to address chronic unemployment and underemployment of disabled Albertans? Specifics, please.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that question. We have some very strong platform commitments addressing underemployment of individuals with disabilities, and I know that

we are investing in inclusive education. We are investing in increasing family-managed services to provide more services for individuals who have disabilities so that they have more opportunities for employment.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that we know that many good-paying jobs require postsecondary education and given that disabled Albertans encounter enormous barriers when it comes to accessing postsecondary education, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what is the economic recovery task force doing to increase access to postsecondary institutions and apprenticeship opportunities for disabled Albertans? Please don't make things up. Give us some specifics. What is the plan? Is there a focus on this group?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. This is a top priority for our government, and it is indeed a very specific focus. That's why in our campaign platform we pledged \$2 million to help strengthen support services for students with disabilities to be able to access postsecondary education, because we recognize, of course, that a postsecondary education helps set students up for success. I hope those are the specifics that the member is looking for. It is an important community that we are dedicated and committed to supporting, and we will do so with this important contribution and investment.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that that minister's officials could not give us any benchmarks at all in Public Accounts when it came to apprenticeship seats for people with disabilities, I would suggest he go back and speak to them. Disabled Albertans live way below the poverty line. My question is simple. What has this UCP government done to address poverty? Before the pandemic we heard them say that it wasn't onerous to reduce the cost-of-living increase to AISH recipients. I would like to know: what has the UCP done to address the poverty of disabled Albertans in Alberta?

2:30

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

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that my hon. colleague the Minister of Advanced Education was talking about inclusive employment, and we have a \$2 million commitment within our platform to advance that. In terms of addressing all the questions around poverty, all of our benefits are intact. AISH recipients are receiving the highest level of core benefits across this nation, and we're committed to actually maintaining those benefits. Our income support program is also a legislated program so that anybody who needs supports and is experiencing hardship has access to those supports.

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

#### **Calgary Storm Damage Costs**

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were all heartbroken to witness the damage caused by last month's hailstorm in northeast Calgary. I have spoken to my colleagues, who have been in constant communication with their constituents as they work through these difficult times. While tragic, we know that the residents of northeast Calgary pay for insurance just for occasions such as these. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: can you please update the House and Albertans on the status of those plans?

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

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. As a Calgarian and as somebody who was born and raised in northeast Calgary, I was very saddened to witness the damage by the hailstorm. Fortunately, the vast majority of the damage caused by this storm is insurable. As we have said from the outset, we fully expect insurance companies to step up and deliver for their clients. Today's report released by the IBC confirms that they will be doing so.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that this has been a traumatic event for many Albertans and given that COVID-19 has already been devastating for many families across this province, to the same minister: can you please explain to Albertans exactly what areas this program is designed to support and provide relief for as Albertans begin to recover from these destructive events?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, from the report we have learned that IBC has estimated almost \$1.2 billion in insured damages with over 70,000 claims being processed. Furthermore, the IBC added that insurers will be on the ground assisting until the work is done. If residents have insurance questions, they can also contact IBC's consumer information centre at 1.844.227.5422.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. The constituents of northeast Calgary will be happy to have this information. To the same minister: how will our government continue to support those affected by this devastating event in the weeks to come?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the \$1.2 billion that will be paid by insurers, government has approved a disaster recovery program to support residents who experienced overland flooding as this type of insurance can be less available in flood-prone areas. While the NDP continue to try to politicize this unfortunate situation, government MLAs in Calgary are focused on getting people back on their feet and getting them the help that they need.

### Site Rehabilitation Program

**Mr. Schmidt:** The federal government gave Alberta a billion dollars to clean up well sites. This money was supposed to help keep the lights on in service companies and keep Albertans employed. The program has no clear criteria for cleanup or any other proper guardrails, and it shows. We're learning through the media today that application approvals are slow and companies are confused. This was supposed to be straightforward. To the minister: why did you mess this up?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The site rehabilitation program is, of course, a new program, and it will require some adjustments. The good news is that Energy is rolling this program out in 10 rounds. The program can be adjusted from round to round and improved. There's an industry advisory committee in place that will be making recommendations. We're committed to ensuring that we can clean up and reclaim well sites in this province and, more importantly, get Albertans back to work.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that I hope that they get this right before round 10 rolls around and given that when the program came out it had no criteria or goals on how many wells the government hoped to clean up or the environmental impact that they would have and given that we now hear that industry is frustrated with the mismanagement by this government of what was literally free money from the federal government and given that this minister doesn't ever seem to feel the need to be accountable to Albertans, will the minister tell Albertans how they can have any trust that this \$1 billion will be spent in the best interest of Albertans and have a positive environmental impact?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it really amusing that the member opposite would suggest, firstly, that it's not our money. I will say this. Albertans have contributed \$20 billion a year to Ottawa over the last couple of decades. We have managed to advocate to get a billion dollars back to put Albertans to work to reclaim well sites. This is a program that we will deliver on. This is Albertans' money. We will put Albertans back to work.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that I wish that the minister was as enthusiastic about pursuing industry for their money to clean up the wells and given that this government just loves creating slush funds for their wealthy friends and insiders and given that the government seems to be failing to maximize the job impact of this billion-dollar orphan well cleanup program, to the minister: is there anything that you can point to that shows us that you've properly used this money? Will you now commit to establishing clear criteria for the applications and to publicly reporting on the impact of how this money is going to be spent?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this program was rolled out in rounds. There will be adjustments made. We will listen to the industry, to their recommendations, and improve the program as it's delivered. One thing that we will do that the members opposite never did when they were in government is we will stand up for the energy industry. We will promote the best energy industry in the world, and we will put Albertans back to work.

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

### School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With less than a month before the government announces its plans for schools this fall, Alberta staff, students, and families want to know if this government will do anything to ensure their safety, and they have fair reason to ask. So far they've seen this government prioritize a no-jobs corporate handout in excess of \$4.7 billion and take taxpayer dollars to pay partisan hacks at UCP headquarters over educational staff for students. To the Minister of Education: will there be any new money to support re-entry to schools this fall?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that we have one of the most comprehensive re-entry plans in all of Canada, and this was developed in consultation with our education partners from the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, and the Alberta School Councils' Association. We've had parents, teachers, administrators, and the ATA all

involved in developing this program. I'm very proud of the comprehensive plan, and we will be ready in September to welcome our students back.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the question was about money, Minister, and given that the costs of meeting the public health guidelines are going to add financial pressures to school boards and given that the government has a responsibility to help both staff and students return to school safely while following the public health guidelines, can the minister tell this House what the school authorities have identified as new pressures related to COVID-19, how much they've requested, and if she's going to do anything to help them meet the new requirements for cleaning, supplies, equipment, and space? If it's not in her binder, could she please table it in this House?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, we've been in contact with all of our education partners. We're continuing to be in contact with all of the education partners. We are addressing all of the issues that they are bringing forward in a timely manner. Of course, there are many logistics that school boards are handling because they are in the best position to handle it. They are closest to the local community and can handle the day-to-day decisions that need to be made.

2:40

**Ms Hoffman:** It sounds like the answer to both questions was: no new money.

Given that many parents of children with special needs are rightfully upset by the cuts to supports that their children have received, including the layoff of more than 20,000 educational staff when these kids needed their help the most, and given that the minister has cut PUF funding and disbanded the RCSD, which means that there will be less support for kids in their early years and that occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and mental health therapists are getting pink slips, why does this minister continue to put a \$4.7 billion corporate handout ahead of Alberta students?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to remind everyone that every school authority in this province is seeing an increase in their funding in the 2020-21 school year. We expect that they will utilize those dollars appropriately. And we will also be working with all of our school authorities to ensure that we are ready for that re-entry in September. I know that teachers are excited, students are excited, and families are excited. We want to welcome the students back, and we will be ready come September.

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I'm pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 203,

the Pension Protection Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. This bill was referred to the committee on June 8, 2020. The committee's final report recommends that Bill 203 not proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 203.

Thank you.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to table a petition with 500 signatures from around Alberta. The petitioners wish for government to implement three changes to the Traffic Safety Act. These changes are to implement safe passing distances, allow two abreast riding when it does not impede traffic, and to require cyclists to ride as far to the right as is safe.

Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 34

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move first reading of Bill 34, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

This act will make minor amendments to a number of acts, which include the Interpretation Act, the Petty Trespass Act, the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, the Family Law Act, the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, the Jury Act, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019, the Public Service Act, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, the Condominium Property Act, the Electronic Transactions Act, the Garage Keepers' Lien Act, the Marriage Act, the Religious Societies' Land Act, and the Teaching Profession Act. These amendments would be housekeeping in nature and would provide clarity and consistency, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Bill 204

#### Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act.

Currently the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, passed by the previous government, contributes to leaving our patients vulnerable to disruptions in the international supply chain of plasma-based medications. The long-term objective of this bill is to create an environment where Alberta and ultimately Canadians have safe, secure, and readily available access to plasma-based medications. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 204, the Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I could use your assistance with this. I understand concurrence on Bill 203 has passed, and I would like to seek unanimous consent from the House. I am seeking debate on concurrence and would appreciate the opportunity from all members of the House to allow one hour of debate on my private member's bill, Bill 203. I understand the opportunity to debate concurrence was missed, and I entreat all members of the Assembly to grant unanimous consent so that I may have that opportunity to speak to my private member's bill for a single hour.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. Let me interrupt you to provide you a vehicle. I'm not suggesting that members will agree because that would be up to each individual member. What you would need to ask for is to request to return to presenting reports.

The request that you will need to make initially would be for unanimous consent to return to presenting reports when the government whip did so at Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees. My recommendation is that we effort that now.

It appears that the deputy Opposition House Leader is rising.

**Mr. Bilous:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just rising for a point of clarification. Can this request be made to the Assembly tomorrow?

**The Speaker:** Not technically, no. Presumably, if there was co-operation inside the House, the government could move a government motion to return to – what would have to happen is the vote that has taken place, when members of the opposition and others voted in favour of concurrence, that vote will need to be rescinded. Then the report will need to be presented again, in which case, if members have objections, then they would provide their objection at that time.

Today the only vehicle that we have is to ask for unanimous consent. The alternative is to provide a government motion requiring that to happen. I'll leave it in the hands of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to ask for unanimous consent should she choose to do so.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to revert to – Mr. Speaker, I will rely on your help for the correct language. The reason I make this request is because I have brought forward private member's Bill 203. The committee has recommended that it not move forward, and the debate for concurrence would be my only opportunity on the floor of the Legislature to make the case for a private member's bill that over 35,000 people have written in support of. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to make my case for a private member's bill that I've spent a great deal of time and effort on, and I seek unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

2:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. A point of order was raised by the hon. Government House Leader at 2:02.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose on a point of order at that time under 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to some comments that were being made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, comments that certainly were going to create disorder, indicating that during her time as Premier she had travelled the country fighting for pipelines, trying to defend Alberta's energy

industry. I would just point to a few things that I think show that that is problematic, and then I will show you why that is likely to create disorder in this Chamber.

First and foremost is that John Horgan, who is of course the Premier of B.C., said in December 2016, when having dinner with the then Premier, that she had no intentions of persuading him on Trans Mountain. That doesn't sound like fighting for pipelines. When asked by the *Calgary Herald's* Don Braid, "So you would not endorse or press for approval of Northern Gateway were you the Premier?" the now Leader of the Opposition said, "I don't think there's any point." And later, when Justin Trudeau killed Northern Gateway, she was silent. The now Leader of the Opposition opposed Keystone XL and answered questions in regard to it. She just said simply: we're against it.

Mr. Speaker, for over 200 days the Alberta NDP was silent on Justin Trudeau's no-more-pipelines law, Bill C-69, including voting against a UCP motion on it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader will know that a point of order is not to be used to continue debate, and thus far in his position I have only heard him continuing the debate of what took place in question period. If he wants to do other than provide information about what the Leader of the Opposition may or may not have done, I'm happy to hear that, or I'm also happy to proceed to the second point of order.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Fair enough, Mr. Speaker. We're just following the process the opposition does with their long rants on points of order, but I'll get to the point, which is your point.

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition did absolutely nothing to defend pipelines. She abandoned this province, and that will create disorder when she makes those facts up inside this Chamber. Shame on her, Mr. Speaker. My constituents have a word for it.

**The Speaker:** I certainly would provide caution that during the use of a point of order to make an allegation that the Leader of the Opposition is making up facts is a lot like other unparliamentary things here in the Assembly.

The hon. deputy Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that this clearly is not a point of order. In fact, the reason that the Leader of the Official Opposition is trying to clarify – and we can highlight all of the trips that she took across the country advocating for TMX. Our government committed 50,000 barrels per day to the Keystone XL pipeline to move that forward. We convinced the federal government to buy the pipeline. There are countless examples where our government, including myself, spoke with policy-makers across this country from indigenous groups, also to unions, to those even in Quebec, who were not onside with pipelines, to tell them the value that the TMX and other pipelines create.

The reason that I'm arguing this point of order, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Just as I interjected to the Government House Leader – it sounded a lot like he was prolonging debate – it seems to be the same on your side of the House. I'm certain that you're about to get to the point.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a point or order, and really what the Government House Leader is doing is wasting time in this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** I concur. This is not a point of order. This is prolonging debate as a perfect example of exactly what happens when members choose to do so.



The second point of order was called at 2:10 by the Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Opposition House Leader under 23(h), (i), (j). At that time the Premier claimed or said that the NDP was against referendums. The reason that I rise on this point of order: that type of language is intentionally used to create disorder in this House. Quite frankly, it is patently false. That couldn't be further from the truth. I'll tell you what we are opposed to, and that is wasting millions of dollars on a referendum that is meant to suppress the Wexiters and separatists that are part of the UCP, that they're trying to quell these concerns. We are not opposed to referendums, Mr. Speaker. The Premier knows that and so do members of the government if they listened to the debate. It's not about being against referendums. It's all of the other facets that this government is trying to ram through in a bill.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader is rising to defend the point, or is the Government House Leader?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** The Government House Leader will certainly rise. Was it the deputy that was rising? I didn't see it.

Back with you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, this is clearly a matter of debate, and the Opposition House Leader knows that. They have spent weeks inside this Chamber complaining against the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General's Bill 26, which brings in a referendum for Albertans to make decisions through a referendum, and they have stood up repeatedly calling it undemocratic. Yes. We're confused, and I'm sure most Albertans are confused, about the argument that referendums are undemocratic, but I'm sure we could be excused for thinking that it is the NDP's position, that they're against referendums, because they've said in this House repeatedly that they're against referendums.

Having said that, it's a matter of debate. In fact, that bill is on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, so we give the Official Opposition House Leader lots of time to reclarify her position. If they're now for democracy, then I have to say congratulations to our side of the House for being able to convince them that referendums are democratic.

**The Speaker:** I think we can all agree – well, it's unlikely that we'll all agree, but I would say that this, too, is a matter of debate as members will make all sorts of statements inside the Assembly about what other individuals may or may not think or believe. I consider this not to be a point of order, the debate completed and closed.

At 2:22 and 2:23 the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods rose on a point of order. Perhaps they're the same.

### Point of Order Allegations against Members

**Mr. Bilous:** Perhaps, Mr. Speaker. Yes, they are. I will bundle them to save the Assembly time. I rise on a point of order, 23(h), (i), (j). Again, comments made. The first comment was by the Government House Leader – in fact, both of them were made by the Government House Leader – accusing the NDP that we, quote, don't care about coal miners and coal families. The reason I rise on a point of order is that these kinds of comments that are false cannot go unchecked in this Chamber. Albertans listening deserve to have members speak the truth when they talk.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the facts are such. Under our government we allocated \$40 million for a worker transition fund for affected coal communities and individuals, including bridges to pensions, including supports for retraining. As minister of economic development and trade I stood up for a coal community transition fund, through which communities like Hanna got access to millions of dollars to move forward on economic diversification projects. There's a list of other things that we did, but the fact of the matter and the reason that this is especially insulting is that it was in fact the Premier himself, when he was a member of cabinet under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, that brought in regulations that saw the phase-out of coal in all communities across this country by 2030, and they had zero supports for the very communities that the Minister of Environment and Parks claims that we don't care about. In fact, the proof is in the pudding. The Premier, when he was a cabinet minister, did nothing to support these coal communities.

On the second point of order – I'll bundle them together, Mr. Speaker – the Minister of Environment and Parks claimed that we were dedicated to blocking pipelines. Again, these types of comments need to be called and called to order, and I can tell the House that we'll be rising on points of order every time false information is trying to be portrayed by members of the government. We have a number of examples for years of advocating on behalf of pipelines moving our products to tidewater. I'm speaking from personal experience as well, and I can tell you that under the Premier, who is now the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, we launched a Keep Canada Working campaign that moved Canadians. There were 4 in 10 Canadians in favour of TMX. By the end of the campaign, 7 in 10 Canadians were in favour of TMX. We worked diligently to educate those Canadians who don't understand the importance of pipelines to the Canadian economy, to jobs. Again, the Leader of the Official Opposition as Premier convinced the Prime Minister to buy the pipeline for \$4.5 billion.

3:00

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is clearly a matter of debate. This was discussed yesterday in this Chamber. I know the opposition is sensitive to their failure when it comes to coal. Shockingly, they continue in this Chamber to attack metallurgical coal and, even more shockingly, continue to attack the workers that work in this industry. As I quoted yesterday from a December 9, 2019, article from the *Financial Post*, when referring to the actions taken by the former NDP government in regard to just one town – there are many more, but we'll refer 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 the town in a three-year stretch between 2016 and 2018. It was devastating for the town of Hanna.

Nothing has changed from my perspective and certainly for the people in Hanna, who I've spoken to recently. In fact, I see the MLA for Hanna nodding his head. He can confirm that his constituents still feel that the NDP government did nothing for their community and, in fact, abandoned them and caused so much of the pain that they experienced. That's their perspective, which is why this is most certainly debate.

In regard to pipelines, which the hon. deputy Opposition House Leader raised in regard to his leader's track record when it comes to pipelines, Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. Again, I already said some quotes earlier in a point of order that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona said when it came to Keystone: we're against it. She sat

silent when Energy East was cancelled by her close, personal friend and ally Justin Trudeau. The reason we had to go to the federal government to get them to pay for Trans Mountain is because the supporters of the NDP continue to block pipelines, and they continue to this day, which is disappointing.

With that said, this is clearly a matter of debate. Despite the failure of the NDP when it comes to coal, which I'm happy to talk about – I'm happy to talk about all the NDP failures, Mr. Speaker, but it has nothing to do with this point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, this has been quite the walk down the garden path together – hasn't it? – particularly because what I think is very clear is that we have a matter of debate here. Both the deputy Official Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader have taken some significant time and opportunity to dig into their individual positions in defence of their individual teams.

All members, I'm sure, have been reading up on *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. If they want to do some light reading this evening, they could double-check, and particularly the deputy Opposition House Leader could double-check, page 639 where it speaks about not utilizing points of order to prolong debate. There are going to be lots of statements that the government will make that the Official Opposition doesn't believe to be as factual as they might like them to be, and it might be hard to believe, but the opposition is going to make a significant number of statements that the government doesn't believe to be factual, and even from time to time politics will break out here inside the Assembly. But everyone will know that *Beauchesne's* 494 says that we must each accept the statement that a member would make as fact even though we may disagree with that fact.

This is a matter of debate, and I encourage all House leadership, as we proceed, to ensure that we're using points of order for what they have been intended for, and that is genuine points of order.

Now, hon. members, I would like to update the House on two very brief points of interest. First of all, I did receive an e-mail from the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Deputy Government House Leader of his contribution to a charity because of his cellphone violation, and I would like to thank him for that.

The other thing that I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly and all hon. members is that I had a very productive phone call with the Consul General of the Solomon Islands earlier today, and I assured him that all members of the Assembly would join the Speaker in wishing congratulations to the country of the Solomon Islands on the 42nd anniversary of their independence.

Hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day Government Motions

### Racism

24. Mr. Kenney moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly
- (a) condemns racism and all forms of bigotry and hatred;
  - (b) affirms the commitment of Alberta to human dignity and equality of all before the law;
  - (c) acknowledges the pernicious and durable nature of antiblack racism;
  - (d) acknowledges a tragic history of racism directed at indigenous people in Canada; and
  - (e) urges the government to consider these issues in its ongoing review of the Police Act.

Mr. Deol moved that the motion be amended by striking out clause (e) and substituting the following:

- (e) urges the government to ensure that these issues and the voices of racialized communities are considered in its ongoing review of the Police Act by immediately establishing an advisory panel
  - (i) to conduct hearings throughout the province to examine and make recommendations in respect of systemic racism in Alberta,
  - (ii) that consists of members of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, provincial indigenous leadership, and Black Lives Matter chapters of Alberta, and
  - (iii) to publish a report with its findings and recommendations no later than October 1, 2020.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 23: Mr. McIver]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has the call. She has up to 90 minutes to debate.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Government Motion 24, condemning racism and bigotry in Alberta, affirming our commitment to human dignity and equality, acknowledging the pernicious and durable nature of antiblack racism, acknowledging a tragic history of racism directed at indigenous people in Canada, and finally urging the government to consider these issues in the ongoing review of the Police Act.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Madam Speaker, there is nothing in this motion to argue against per se. However, there is also nothing in this motion. This motion is for us or, really for the UCP members, who needed something to say after they rejected the debate on our motion to have action to fight racism. Instead, this motion is designed to make it seem like we are doing something. We aren't. The members opposite chose not to.

When we put forward ideas to the Premier in question period, we asked for a panel that would include members of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, indigenous leaders, and Black Lives Matter advocates so that the province could hold public hearings and really listen to Albertans, just like we're seeing the cities do with respect to their law enforcement procedures, so that we would have recommendations that could be brought forward to this House that reflect the real experiences that people endure.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadows proposed a motion to this House and spoke beautifully to . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Just a reminder that we are on amendment A1. I know your comments will pertain to the amendment as we proceed with debate.

**Ms Notley:** Okay. All right.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadows proposed a motion for this House, spoke beautifully to it. I quote the motion that he proposed:

All of these issues facing these marginalized communities have resulted from this historical and systemic experience ingrained in our society . . . In order to understand the gravity of this issue that has existed for centuries, we need to work with members from these disenfranchised communities to ensure a collaborative approach is taken.

Madam Speaker, thousands of Albertans protested across the province, including 15,000 people outside this building alone. All of them have voices, and all of them deserve to be heard. Yet so far all we have seen is a commitment from the Justice minister to have

some one-on-one meetings, presumably with representatives from these communities, but we really don't know.

Now, this is a significant moment in history. Madam Speaker, we just won't find these kinds of answers behind closed doors. We need there to be open conversation, open hearings. Now, we have an Anti-Racism Advisory Council composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences that is fully equipped to do this work. It's actually their mandate. Yet as the entire world is confronting this issue, this government has given them no discernible public role. They're markedly absent from this conversation. Instead we have a motion to acknowledge and condemn racism, something we must do, of course, inside and outside this House every day at every opportunity. The problem is that this is kind of the bare minimum. Albertans expect more. They expect action. We cannot look at what is happening in the United States as someone else's problem. It's not. That's why we're talking about this today. We should never forget our own history with indigenous people and racialized communities, which carries forward to today.

3:10

Now, while the height of the KKK's activities in Alberta were in the '20s and '30s, the fact is that they were still a recognized society by this province until 2003. The last residential school closed here in 1996. The government of Canada apologized in 2008. Some people aren't aware that the '60s scoop persisted into the 1980s, and the government of Alberta issued an apology in 2018. There is deep generational pain from these injustices that endures today. I've seen it. But it's so much more than that, Madam Speaker. The fact is that this is a persistent problem extending throughout every facet of our society, and we must face it.

If we just look at recent events in this province, we have the white supremacist group, Soldiers of Odin, who held an event at the Royal Canadian Legion in Grande Prairie in May. We had a deputy commissioner in the RCMP say that racism doesn't exist in Canadian policing. Now, thankfully he did retract that comment after hearing from the community, and he pledged to do better. The fact is that right before that he said that there is no such thing as racism in Canadian policing, and I think we know that that is a concern. We have the head of ASIRT saying that there is no reason to track race data, and this is especially disappointing after Ontario's police watchdog said that they would actually begin to collect data on race in their investigations. These are the things that are happening in other provinces but, unfortunately, not here.

Now, organizers had to postpone an antiracism march in Innisfail after the event was swamped with backlash from people writing, quote, white lives matter. End quote. These are things that all happened very, very recently.

We have this government appointing a man to select provincial judges who doesn't believe there's a need to actively work to include people of colour on the bench and who, it was subsequently discovered, promoted anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. After days where this person was actually defended by the Justice minister, he finally did resign. Clearly, he should never have been appointed in the first place, Madam Speaker.

We have an Edmonton public school trustee who said that refugee children are inherently violent and that that's why we need police in schools. This trustee also resigned, pledging to do better. And we've all seen the video footage of the violent arrest of Chief Allan Adam, who was punched repeatedly in the head. Why? His truck plate was expired by five days.

Just recently we've learned of the senior staffer in the Premier's office who called the experience of indigenous people in residential schools, their trauma, and their pain, quote, a bogus genocide story,

end quote. Now, there are many, many heinous and revolting comments made by the Premier's speech writer, yet the Premier chooses to protect this person. He chooses to make excuses for him; he chooses to keep paying him. Now, this isn't about whether or not that person makes policy, and it isn't about whether the Premier agrees with his views or not. What he is doing is saying that those views are welcome in his office, and that does say something about the highest levels of government in this province.

This is just in the past few weeks, Madam Speaker, and we can't ignore it any longer. Racism is real. It is here in Canada, and it is here in Alberta. It is overt; it is subtle; it is systemic. It is embedded in social and economic systems. Its impact is physical, emotional, and psychological, and it is painful. It's time to start doing something about it. That is why our amendment to the motion that is in front of this House calls on this government, first, to listen and, secondly, to acknowledge systemic racism and the many, many, many ways in which it infects the work that we do in this Chamber, in this government, in this province. Failing to acknowledge it means allowing it to persist.

Now, the motion that the government has agreed to let us debate today is not the first to be debated in this Legislature. We passed more than a few like this. Acknowledging racism is fine, but as I said, we need to act, and as I said as well, the most important part is to listen.

We need to listen to indigenous leaders; for instance, the many indigenous leaders who are calling for the Premier's speech writer to be fired. We need to listen to racialized communities, advocates across the province who are asking to be included in the review of how law enforcement engages with people of colour across this province. We need to listen to the activists, the academics, the community and faith leaders, and others who fight racism in their communities each and every day or who live it each and every day. We must listen, in fact, to all Albertans who live it and who must suffer through it each and every day.

We must show that we stand with them in solidarity and that we will use every means at our disposal to elevate their voices and their experiences. By denying them that opportunity, by being the Legislature that refuses to do what we have seen in some of our municipal communities, that refuses to give a platform for these people's voices to be heard, to lead the discussion, in fact we are denying their voice.

Now, the fact is that this government should support our amendment to this motion for there to be a panel. They voted it down once. Now we've got the amendment, so it gives you a second opportunity to make a better decision. Media statements are not enough. Vague promises are not enough. This motion unamended is definitely not enough.

The second thing that we need to do is understand that racism is systemic and endemic and present in all social structures. Now, many people have tried to argue that it's not, but I disagree with those people. Probably the person that says it best is Sandy Hudson, who is the founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto and the Black Lives Matter movement presence in Canada. You would have heard about her, I'm sure. She said it best. In a recent CBC interview she said, "The way that racism and anti-Blackness often operates in Canada is by denial and through refusal, a refusal to take a look at the information that exists."

Let's take a small moment to look at just a little bit of the data. Here's what data from StatsCan shows. Racism shows up in our justice system, where black and indigenous people are overrepresented in federal prisons when considering their fair share of the overall population.

It shows up on our school grounds and postsecondary institutions, where although 94 per cent of black youth, for instance,

aged 15 to 25 said that they would like to get a university degree, only 60 per cent actually think that they can.

It shows up in hiring practices, where black Canadians are far more likely than nonracialized Canadians and other visible minorities to be unemployed, and black men and women living in Edmonton and Calgary make significantly less money than nonblack counterparts.

It shows up in our health care, where because black Canadians are nearly twice as likely as nonracialized Canadians to be considered low-income, they have a higher likelihood of developing chronic diseases or illness.

It shows up on our streets and in our communities, where in 2017 the number of hate crimes in Canada was higher than any other year in the past decade.

All of these same statistics hold true for indigenous people nation-wide.

Now, that's just some of the evidence. We could go on forever. Again, really, what's more important is to hear from people themselves.

For those who would argue that systemic racism does not exist or that if it does, it's not intentional, let me say that I fundamentally reject that argument. In the end, whether originally intentional or not, failing to acknowledge the statistics, the reality, the experience is in and of itself intentional. The failure to acknowledge and the ultimate result, the ultimate discriminatory outcome: those are both intentional acts. Systemic racism must be fought throughout our democratic system. Unfortunately, to date this government has rejected all efforts on that front.

Now, I listened to the Premier's comments when he spoke on this motion. You know, I did agree with many of the things he stated, or at least in some cases I know where he's coming from. But I have to comment on just one piece at the end and follow up on some of the comments that my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre made because I was moved by them.

**3:20**

Toward the end of the Premier's comments he chose to wrap up by telling the story that many, many, many of us know of John Ware to underscore the Premier's point that relationships are the best cure for racism, not posters or public awareness campaigns. I agree. Posters and public awareness campaigns: not your best foot forward. There's much more to do. Unfortunately, we don't find that particular prescription in the comments offered up by the Premier. Now, we will all agree that John Ware was a historic Albertan – absolutely – a great cowboy and pioneer of all the things that make our province and our history great, and all of those things alone make him a profoundly important figure in Alberta's history.

But, Madam Speaker, John Ware is actually not the best example of fighting racism. The Premier described racism as something that didn't get John down and how he worked hard to overcome it as an obstacle, but racism should not be a motivational force for people, and it should not have to be a motivational force for people. No one should have to work 10 times harder to earn the respect of a white person or in order to be treated fairly. Now, John Ware was beloved – absolutely – and, of course, he did work 10 times harder on many, many fronts. But is the Premier's message to the 15,000 people outside the Legislature that when someone calls you something because of the colour of your skin, it's your job to take that in, buck up, and prove them wrong and build those relationships?

The Member for Edmonton-City Centre spoke about this in the House because he listened, too. It struck him, and he said this.

Relationships haven't fixed these systemic problems, and it's not up to black Albertans to earn that fix. They should not have to be John Ware to be given the dignity, respect, and opportunity that

each of us is entitled to as Albertans, Canadians, and human beings.

This fantasy of the sympathetic racist who can be changed when a person of colour does something extraordinary is deeply damaging to the fight against racism.

So where do we go from here, and how do we fight systemic racism? Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to say that I have all the answers, because I definitely don't, or that our government did enough, because we definitely did not. But contrary to what those folks over there like to say, we did take some good steps to creating a more equal and inclusive Alberta, things that did and do have a real impact on our province. We worked hard to address poverty, to lift people out of circumstances where they and their families were vulnerable. We took 40,000 children out of poverty. To be clear, racialized communities were a disproportionate number of those children, so it mattered when that happened. We added the child benefit. We put in the \$15-an-hour minimum wage. We made investments in affordable housing.

We ensured equitable resources in education. We had the classroom improvement fund, one of the first things that the folks over there cut, which, among other things, focused on ensuring there were more English language learning tutors and more supports for children, for new Canadians in our schools. That is another reason, just to throw it out there, Madam Speaker, that you don't fire 20,000 educational assistants in the middle of a pandemic. We promoted change in our school curriculum not only to enhance shared understanding of past wrongs with respect to residential schools but also to get kids from a very early age to challenge their own assumptions and the assumptions of others.

Now, the Premier mentioned that racism is "a sickness of the soul," and it's true. But if it is that, it is also a sickness that is caught from others. No one is born racist. Racism is taught, and it is fostered by society. Racism is a learned behaviour. Therefore, it can become unlearned. So when the Premier goes on and on about the so-called ideological curriculum rewrite, he should understand why that makes those of us over here rather frustrated. Teaching kids about racism is not putting politics in the classroom no matter how many times the Premier tries to say that. What it does is that it fights racism on a systemic basis, and it reduces the degree to which we see it in our societies, something that one would assume we should all want to achieve.

Another thing we have to do is hire with intention. Now, I fundamentally believe that if we want to represent and serve all Albertans, the government must include all Albertans. This means diversity on agencies, boards, and commissions, in all expert panels, in all committees, in all application processes, in our candidate slate, and, indeed, in the cabinet: in everything. Now, folks over there will talk about how they don't do quotas and that everything is based on merit, but here's the thing. If you have an all-white panel, which many of theirs have been, you're actually saying two things. First, you should check your idea of what actually constitutes merit. Secondly, it says that you just didn't look hard enough.

We worked hard to create a transparent and open system for appointment to agencies and boards. We enhanced efforts to recruit people through a number of different committees to reach a number of different communities. We were intentional about seeking representational diversity. Now, this government has actively abandoned that work. They claim that merit is colour-blind. It's not, not when it's only being defined by one group. They also abandoned the transparent interview process, and since then they've relapsed to their old friends-and-insiders strategy. The result? Well, as I've already mentioned, an anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist, who thinks we have too many women on the bench, charged with

reviewing appointments to the judiciary. Yeah, I see no way that that could possibly go wrong.

We need greater accountability for ourselves and for leaders at every level, which is why we asked the government to do more than making a few phone calls to police departments about the Police Act. If the problem we're trying to solve is racism, why are we not asking those who have been on the wrong end of it to help to lead the charge and then to be the authors of this solution? No. Instead, what we're going to do, if this amendment does not pass and the motion passes as currently written, is that we're going to tell those people who have been at the wrong end of systemic racism what the solution is, and then we're going to go consult behind closed doors so that the government can then tell racialized communities after the fact what they themselves asked for. It won't work. It's so much less than what's required.

Now, these ideas are not exhaustive, but they do reflect a desire to challenge our institutions to be better.

You know, earlier this month over in Ottawa – maybe it was last week, month, whatever, two, three weeks ago – everyone was shocked when Jagmeet Singh was thrown out of the House of Commons for calling another MP a racist. “It’s unparliamentary,” they said. Well, that might be true according to the rules written by a particular group of people who shared a particular group of characteristics over a hundred years ago. We should at least acknowledge the fact that the first racialized leader of a major political party in Canada is frustrated and that he is tired of having to seek unanimous consent just to talk about racism, let alone pass a motion. Racialized Canadians and Albertans are sick and tired of do-nothing politicians who want to pass performative motions in the hope that Canada settles down and goes back to, quote, idling some more. Enough is enough.

Now, I support the amendment to this motion. Even if it fails, I will vote in favour of this motion, but it would be nice if this government did literally anything else to listen to Albertans and change things for the better. This is the bare minimum. This motion will not make Alberta any more inclusive or welcoming. This just lets us feel like we did something when 15,000 people showed up outside these doors. I want you all to know that unamended this motion doesn't do that.

The fact is this – and this is important. This came up after I started writing this speech, but it really, really needs to be repeated. The Premier can pass as many motions as he likes, but he needs to walk the talk, and he's not. He is defending his racist speech writer and that racist speech writer's right to keep a \$150,000-a-year job when that racist speech writer has not apologized for even one of the countless racist, homophobic, Islamophobic statements that he has made. Now, that decision does not reflect on the racist speech writer. His views are quite clear. They reflect on the Premier, and they reflect badly.

3:30

What I'm going to do and what members of my caucus are going to do is we'll wake up tomorrow, and we will talk to Albertans. In the coming days we're going to invite Albertans to talk to us about real actions we can take to address systemic racism at the provincial level and ask them about what proposals we need to be bringing into this Chamber again in the hope that the next time we bring them in, they won't be voted down. We'll ask them about their experiences with racism, how it's impacted their lives, what holds them back, what they think needs to change, and how we can do it together.

I'm going to consider my own privilege, including my position as leader of a political party and elected MLA in this House, to use every means at my disposal to make their voices heard. This work

matters. It matters that when a person of colour goes for an evening run to a Tim Hortons, he isn't greeted by racist flags. It matters that when kids go to school, they don't have to be teased or mocked because English isn't their first language, and, more importantly, it matters that at that school those kids get all the help they need to learn as well or better than any other student. It matters that when a young woman walks down the street wearing a hijab, she doesn't have things thrown at her from passing vehicles.

Madam Speaker, NDP MPP Rosemary Brown, the first black woman elected to a provincial Legislature in Canada, spoke these words in 1972. She said, “Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.” We should remember that while all of us are about to vote ultimately in favour of this motion in here, until we do something out there, none of us in here have made it.

That is all I have to say, and I now move to adjourn debate on this motion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 26 Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020

[Adjourned debate July 7: Ms Rosin]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 26? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and offer a few comments on Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. I've heard with great interest a number of the comments that have been made, particularly by backbenchers in the UCP caucus, around how our views on referenda reflect the respect or lack of respect that individual members or parties have for the process of democracy here in the House.

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Shameful.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I hear the Member for Calgary-Klein saying that those views are shameful, and I want to take a few minutes to address some of the problems that I have with the principle behind this bill.

The first of the problems that I have is that the principle of referenda is widely regarded by elected officials on both sides of the aisle as being against the Westminster parliamentary tradition, which we all hold in high esteem here in this place. To make that argument, I'm going to rely on the quotes from a distinguished politician. In 1975 this person wrote:

How tired one gets of the well-worn cliché “the full-hearted consent of the people”. What exactly is meant by this? Referenda for every important piece of legislation? If this was the case, we would have no Race Relations Act, immigration would have been stopped, abortions would still be illegal and hanging still be in force. All these laws were passed not only without this full-hearted consent nonsense, but, if the polls are to be believed, in the face of a determined 70 to 80 per cent. of the electors' wishes to the contrary.

Now, Madam Speaker, that person went on to say in this letter to the editor written in 1975 that perhaps the late Lord Attlee was right when he said that the referendum was a device of dictators and demagogues.

Now, Madam Speaker, people would be interested to know that the author of that letter was one Margaret Thatcher. Before I

continue to go on, just let me say that I am no fan of Margaret Thatcher. If nothing else goes right for me in a day, I can at least count on enjoying the fact that Margaret Thatcher is still dead, and the only thing that I regret about Margaret Thatcher's death is that it happened probably 30 years too late.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I don't even think it's questionable that that's totally inappropriate in this Assembly, and I would ask that you apologize and withdraw and then continue with debate.

**Mr. Schmidt:** All right. I'll apologize and withdraw.

[The Speaker in the chair]

My point being that obviously the words of Margaret Thatcher are meaningful to members opposite and that they hold her in high regard, so it's interesting to me that they would be taking a position so in opposition to what one of the luminaries of the world-wide conservative movement took with regard to the issue of referenda in 1975.

It's also interesting, Mr. Speaker, because in a debate I think regarding changes to standing orders – I can't recall quite clearly – a number of backbenchers from the UCP caucus relied on a quote from Edmund Burke with regard to the duties and roles of a Member of Parliament. I'd like to read that into the record.

Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion . . . Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament.

Now, that was a quote from Edmund Burke, which was frequently brought up in debate regarding changes to the standing orders that we discussed approximately this time last year with respect to the role of an elected Member of Parliament based on the Westminster model like our own here. It's interesting that a year ago the members opposite were so keen to use Burke's quotations and guidance with respect to how they should conduct themselves and conduct their work on behalf of constituents, yet those very same people, when it comes to issues of democracy and debate here in Alberta, are willing to abdicate that responsibility, which they claimed to have believed in, to issues of referenda. They say that when questions are truly important, Mr. Speaker, it's not our job; we should just turn it over to Albertans to vote on these questions. It's curious to me that a year ago the members opposite were so keen to rely on the guidance from Edmund Burke, but when it comes to discussing the role of referenda in the Westminster Parliamentary tradition, they haven't brought him up once.

The other issue that I have is the difficulty that we have with formulating a straight question. You know, the members opposite have continually said that it's just a matter of simply asking Albertans what they want to do or what action they want government to take on a simple question. Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know how easy it is to come up with a question that is very difficult to answer. I recall a number of times in conversations with my partner – sometimes before going out she would ask me if the pants that she was wearing would make her look fat. Well, we all know that those kinds of questions are a trap and that there's no right answer. It's quite easy to come up with referenda questions that are also similarly confusing and nothing but a minefield.

3:40

Now, the Premier in question period just yesterday, I think, gave us an excellent example. When we were asking him about this issue of referenda, you know, he essentially paraphrased a question that he was going to put to the people of Alberta with respect to our pensions. I don't have the exact quote here, so I'm paraphrasing, but it was something along the lines of that we will ask the people of Alberta: do you trust Justin Trudeau to manage billions of dollars of your pension dollars, or should those be managed by the people of Alberta? Well, if you frame the question like that, of course you're going to get a response from Albertans that say that we should manage this money responsibly. Justin Trudeau is not exactly a popular figure in the province of Alberta, so if we framed a referendum question the way the Premier framed it, then we are going to get the answer that the Premier wanted.

That has been the problem with referenda ever since they've been introduced into the parliamentary tradition here in Canada. We only need to cast our minds back to the Quebec referendum of 1995. Just for those of you who have forgotten what the question was that was asked of the people of Quebec, it read:

Do you agree that Québec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the Bill respecting the future of Québec and of the agreement signed on 12 June 1995?

That wasn't a clear question, Mr. Speaker, and I think the results of that referendum bear out the fact that it wasn't a clear question. The result was so narrow in large part because it wasn't a clear question.

The federal government was so concerned about whether or not these kinds of things could be decided by referenda that they passed the Clarity Act, which required these types of referenda to be conducted with a clear and unambiguous question. We don't have that here in this piece of legislation that's before us.

Now, I know that the members opposite in particular have a dim view of the people of Quebec at times, and they might say: well, what happened in Quebec during their referendum couldn't possibly happen here because we're Albertans.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker. You and I have a common friend, Mr. Bob Clark, who was the chair of the board of Olds College. When I had the opportunity to meet him, we were talking about the changes to the electricity market here in Alberta, and he reminded me that in 1948 the people of Alberta had their say in a referendum on what the future of the electricity market would look like in this province. It's interesting what that question was. The people of Alberta were asked either "Are you in favour of the generation and distribution of electricity being continued by the Power Companies?" or "Are you in favour of the generation and distribution of electricity being made a publicly owned utility administered by the Alberta Government Power Commission?" That's not a very clear question, and the fact that option A was chosen by 139,991 people and option B was chosen by 139,840 people indicates quite clearly that the people of Alberta were divided almost evenly on the issue and probably couldn't provide a clear answer because they weren't asked a clear question.

Mr. Speaker, I can't in good conscience vote in favour of a bill that allows referenda to be put to the people of Alberta without the requirement that they be asked a clear and unambiguous question.

The other issue that I have with this piece of legislation is the fact that it gives the power to the Premier to ask only a particular portion of the province a referendum question. We have an interesting track record of doing just that here in the province of Alberta. In 1957 the province of Alberta conducted the Alberta liquor plebiscite. Now, prior to 1957, Mr. Speaker, it was illegal for men and women to drink in the same establishment – it was also illegal for people to

serve alcohol on airplanes, but that's another issue – but the government put a question to some of the people of Alberta about that issue. They asked people in Edmonton and Calgary whether or not they were in favour of modernizing liquor laws to allow men and women to drink together. The people outside of Edmonton and Calgary had no say in the matter, which is strange. I don't understand why the government chose only to ask residents of Edmonton and Calgary whether or not the entire province should change the liquor laws to allow women and men to drink together, but they did. Oddly enough, the people of Edmonton and Calgary made the decision on behalf of the entire province of Alberta to change those liquor laws.

This is exactly the problem that we have with this bill. We could have a repeat of that exact same scenario 65 years later. We could ask only the citizens of Calgary if we think that Alberta should switch to an Alberta pension plan. We could ask only the people of Edmonton if they think that Alberta should have its own provincial police force. If the members opposite are so keen to allow all Albertans to have their say on these important matters of public policy, then why are they presenting to us legislation that allows for only asking a certain number of Albertans these important questions?

Mr. Speaker, this bill is fraught with problems. It throws out hundreds and hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition, it doesn't require Albertans to be asked a clear and unambiguous question, and it allows only some Albertans that the Premier himself chooses to make these decisions on behalf of the whole province. I can't think of anything less democratic than this piece of legislation, and therefore I cannot vote in favour of it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or a comment for the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. The hon. Minister of Health can't help himself.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the kids on the Internet call it Godwin's law, the adage that asserts that as discussion progresses, the probability that somebody would compare somebody to Nazism approaches one. Although Godwin's law really does usually and is supposed to apply to what happens on the Internet, here we see it happening here in this Chamber, which is quite a disgrace. If the hon. member is going to be quoting indirectly former Prime Minister Clement Attlee and his comments about referenda being an alien device used by Nazis and fascists, I mean, we've really just jumped the shark.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schmidt:** Under 23(h), (i), and (j), I think the member is using language that's insulting and abusive and imputing false motives. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** He knows very well that the quote I made from Prime Minister Attlee said that referenda were the device of dictators and demagogues. He did not in any way reference Nazis or fascists, and I in no way compared this bill to giving power to

Nazis and fascists. I ask that the member recognize that he made a mistake, apologize for it, and withdraw the comments.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health on the point of order.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The quote that was provided by the hon. member was a rephrasing of Clement Attlee's quote about referenda. He decided to quote Margaret Thatcher, who was quoting Attlee. The quote that Attlee provided was a reference to Nazism and fascism. If he's going to be referencing Prime Minister Clement Attlee's comments, he is referencing this reference to Nazism and fascism. I would submit that this is a matter of debate.

3:50

**The Speaker:** You know, hon. members, I am unsure whether or not it, in fact, is a point of order. Herein lies the challenge. If we have two different sets of the facts, and if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar's facts are correct, then referring or implying that he was comparing referendums to Nazism, I would submit, is a point of order. However, I am not familiar with the references that either of you make. As such, I will provide the strongest caution possible without calling it a point of order when referring to members inside the Chamber who may be associating one thing or another with Nazism or other significant genocides from the past. While I guess I would say that I'm not sure if it's a point of order, I would provide caution to the hon. member. Equally so, if, in fact, the hon. Minister of Health's set of facts is correct and as he reports them is correct, I would use caution for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar when citing such genocides in the House.

Now, the Speaker's role in the Assembly is to defend members' opportunity to say things even if I don't agree with them or if they are distasteful. I will leave it at that for now, provide some caution, and we can all move forward.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it would also be helpful for hon. members in this Legislature, if they do want to quote a Prime Minister, perhaps to do further research than simply going to rabble.ca.

Look, we have a situation here where after World War II we did have Prime Ministers who did see it as an alien device, as it were, Mr. Speaker. But the United Kingdom has, actually, a very long history in having referenda in its matters, going back not just to the Scottish referendum but also various other referendums. The Welsh as well have adopted referenda in their politics. What we see here is the hon. member, unfortunately, taking some of the comments and the views of Prime Ministers in the past during a time in Europe when referenda were seen to be an alien device. Look, it was even opposed by Harold Wilson, the Labour Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, who ended up being, I think, the first to bring referenda to the United Kingdom.

Now, since that use of referenda by the United Kingdom, with a lot of success, Mr. Speaker, I think that we see the views of Prime Ministers and those who live within the United Kingdom in seeing the use of having that direct democracy. The idea that one would argue what was in the bill and having the ability for Albertans to have a say in matters that occur in Alberta, whether it's what Albertans might decide regarding a pension plan – the idea of calling this undemocratic is completely absurd.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very thankful for having the opportunity of being able to speak on this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the second reading debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to add some comments here to Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020. I'm almost wondering if we should maybe put in brackets there somewhere: if the Premier decides that's what happens. The reason I'm saying that: you know, we're talking about a bill here that is 22 pages long, yet I only got to page 2 before all kinds of significant problems with how this is being rolled out. Here we have something that the UCP government is trying to roll out to Albertans. They put a nice shiny little package around on the outside of it, and it looks all great. The problem is that once you get inside of it, you find that it's maybe not quite as good as you were told it was.

I look at this language here, right on page 2 here:

- (2) An order under subsection (1) shall specify
  - (a) the question or questions that are to be put to the electors.

We're sitting here trying to sell it to Albertans that, you know, you're going to be able to have a referendum on something that is very, very passionate to you, but essentially the Premier is going to get to decide how that question actually looks, so it's not really the question that Albertans get to choose. It's the question that he gets to choose, Mr. Speaker.

Moving along, under that same section:

- (b) whether the referendum is to be held
  - (i) in conjunction with a general election under the Election Act,
  - (ii) separately as a stand-alone referendum on a date provided in the order, or
  - (iii) in conjunction with the general elections under the Local Authorities Election Act.

Now, the reason why that's a concern is because when you put this together with the other suite of bills that we've seen, with Bill 27 and 29, what you start to do is create all kinds of noise during a time when people are really trying to focus.

You know, you look at the local authorities. They're looking to see what councillor they may want to vote for, they're trying to listen very intently what mayor they might want to vote for, maybe the school trustee in their area, whether that be for public or for Catholic, but at the same time now they potentially have this referendum going on, and they could have also a Senate election going on at the same time. It puts Albertans at a disadvantage because they're setting it up to create all kinds of chaos, and that is just not fair to Albertans. They should get to focus on that. So that is another problem I have. Like I said, this is just where we've gotten to.

- (c) the areas of Alberta in which the referendum is to be held.

I know my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar had mentioned this, where the Premier gets to decide: well, the referendum will be held over here for you, but it might not get held over here for the rest of you. But based on that question that he might choose, it could end up affecting everybody. That was the example that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar brought up around Edmonton and Calgary making decisions for the rest of the province. Is that representing what Albertans want? Again, shiny package but not so great on the inside.

- (d) whether the results of the referendum are to be binding.

Well, this is quite interesting, Mr. Speaker. We'll go through all the motions to get to a referendum. Maybe we'll even get lucky, and the question or questions that will be put together by the

Premier will actually be acceptable to Albertans. They'll get their chance to vote. After that's all said and done – and I'll get to some other parts about the referendum itself that I hope have been communicated to Albertans with regard to this – then he might just take those results, rip them up, throw them in the garbage, and go: sorry; that's not binding. But we've told Albertans: "You get to have your voice heard. It just doesn't get to count this time."

4:00

I look further down, whether the referendum is to be conducted by mail-in ballot. Well, I don't know about anybody else – and I'm sure it was never ever done on purpose, Mr. Speaker – but a piece of my mail gets lost. Now, thankfully, most of the time that my mail has gotten lost, it's gotten lost on the next street over from where I live, at the same address. The good news is that we constantly trade our mail back and forth. We get theirs. They get ours. But at least we know.

Can we say with all certainty that every neighbour is going to have that relationship and that they won't either throw out the mail – I have heard of that happening – or send it back in the mail? Who knows how long that will get delayed, and by the time they get it, get to mark their ballot, and then get it sent back, will they have missed the deadline? Now they don't even get their vote counted. I have some concerns around that. I certainly look forward to, you know, when this bill gets to Committee of the Whole. Maybe somebody from the government side may get up to explain how this process will unfold and waylay any of those concerns that I have around that. If that's the case, I'm grateful for that.

But to sit here and try to sell to Albertans that we're going to let them have their voices heard but we're going to set up all the – I shouldn't even say "we." The Premier is going to set up all the rules on how it's going to be conducted. I don't think that's exactly very genuine, especially when you have all the other things going on in the other suite of bills, in 29 and 27, bringing back the Wild West of elections and whatnot. They're going to be trying to cut through all that noise, all this extra money that we've seen that will be put through into advertising. It's funny. I remember members that sit currently on the government benches and in the caucus arguing profusely, "You're going to create a gong show around this" and everything like that. Yet now we're offering to up the ante even further. People are going to be trying to cut through that while trying to decide if they can even understand the question to begin with.

Some of the other concerns I have around this: has the government done any calculations on what a referendum will cost Albertans? I'm curious if they have that number. Maybe once we get into Committee of the Whole, we'll see that, but I'm kind of wondering when I see decisions that the government is making around pensions and, "Oh, well, it's going to save us a few million dollars" while sacrificing billions, potentially, in lost money being made. We're so wrapped up about saving those few millions. What's it going to cost to run the referendum?

I mean, my gosh, we've just seen changes around the program for seniors for the fall alert system because it's going to save a little bit of money. Quite honestly, I think that's the epitome of being cheap. Have you done the cost on a referendum? You're so willing to cheap out on the fall alert system. I look forward to seeing those numbers. Some of the initial numbers that I've seen are quite significant, Mr. Speaker. We're cherry-picking about where we want to save little bits of money here and there, but we're totally ready to do that.

Why is it necessary to even have, quite frankly, third-party advertisers during a referendum? If your question is going to be so easy to read and so straightforward, you shouldn't need to worry.



You should be able to put it out there. People should be able to read that in five seconds and vote. Why do we need to start having that kind of thing available with regard to referendums? The government should just be able to spend a few dollars: “Hey, there’s a referendum coming up. Keep an eye out in your mailbox. Hopefully, your ballot shows up.” I just can’t help but start to think that this is all being purposely crafted to make it very difficult for Albertans to exercise the right that they want to give them. A shiny package, not so great on the inside. I wonder why we’re trying so hard.

I have another question around: you know, if it’s a citizen initiative and if it’s sponsored by big donors, how do you plan to handle that? I look forward to hearing that information later on, hopefully, in Committee of the Whole. I definitely look forward to what that would look like if we start adding a mail-in ballot for that kind of thing. I’m not too sure how the government plans to keep all of this that might be going on at the same time separate and clear so that Albertans are going to be able to focus on this.

If we’re putting a question to them like leaving CPP – of course, we’ve established that, you know, if you’re taking pensions over here to group them all up for the bigger bang for the buck but then we’re going to take this money away and make it smaller, it kind of doesn’t make sense – I’m hoping that the question on a referendum will be clear enough. I’m hoping that maybe the government of Alberta will put out some information about not only the benefits but anything that’s not a benefit, like maybe information around that we might lose out on making \$13 billion plus over the first five years of that taking place.

Like my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar, the way this bill is structured right now – as I made mention, I only got to page 2 before I saw some significant problems – I can’t support this. Maybe we’ll see some amendments coming up in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, to clean some of this up, maybe actually put it into the hands of Albertans, not just the Premier, to decide the entire structure and then, at the end of the day, if it even counts or not. I have a feeling that Albertans aren’t going to be happy if we spend what could be millions of dollars on a referendum just to find out: well, yeah, we’re just going to throw the results out because the Premier doesn’t like them. I don’t think that they’re going to be happy about that.

I look forward to hearing more about this bill as we move forward. Hopefully, we will maybe see some amendments even brought forward from the government benches on how we can clean up some of the language that’s in this.

4:10

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

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour to rise under 29(2)(a) in regard to Bill 26 and maybe just set the record straight a little bit about some of the comments we just heard from the opposition and the Member for Edmonton-Decore. We’re talking about Bill 26, Constitutional Amendment Referendum Act, 2020. I know that when speaking to my constituents, they often reach out in different ways and want to voice their own opinions. They want to know that their voices are heard directly. It’s the most direct form of democracy.

We heard a lot of comments there about confusion. The member seemed to think that Albertans don’t have the capacity to tell the difference between a referendum question, a Senate election, a municipal election. I know I’m quite confident in my constituents in Drumheller-Stettler. I’m even confident in his constituents in Edmonton-Decore. I think we’re all confident in all Albertans to be

able to be engaged, go to the polls, and understand the question that is being asked of them. I think it’s ridiculous. If that member or any other member is confused at the time of a referendum, reach out for help, get a tutor, or get someone to explain it to you. I think it’s an absolute joke and just a continual waste of time by the other side, but I’ll let him respond.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Oh, I’m very happy to respond, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, when you talk about me getting a tutor: maybe you should get a tutor to read your own bill. It’s right there on page 2, subsection (2). It says that your boss gets to choose the question, not the people of Alberta. He gets to choose. He gets to decide where the vote will take place. So won’t your constituents be really happy with you if your boss decides, “Sorry; your area doesn’t get to vote on this, but it still might affect you”? It doesn’t make any sense at all. So why are you putting in this kind of misdirectional language, I think we’ll call it? I’m not convinced. He didn’t convince me that this language is not a problem.

I’ve spent a considerable amount of time looking at language in my former career, always looking for the problems, always looking for the loopholes. One of your ministers seems to think that “will,” “may,” and “shall” are the same word, which they’re not. And I still look forward to any organization that ends up having to take that to arbitration and loses. I’m expecting the minister to jump up and reverse that decision. So why would I not be concerned about what I’m reading here?

When you start interjecting all kinds of other things going on and especially if the question isn’t worded very well – I’ve already seen a few examples of that case, a shiny little package, Mr. Speaker, but a whole lot different once you open the package.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there’s a minute and 20 left if anyone else has a brief comment. The hon. Member for Lac Ste Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Smith:** Oh, I’m sorry.

**Mr. Getson:** I’ll just wrap it up and let that fellow speak if he needs to.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a sincere question on my part to the hon. member across the way. It seems to me that we’re talking about different kinds of referenda here. One would be government referenda, where it’s not unusual for Executive Council or the Premier or somebody to put forward a question. The others would be citizens-initiated referenda. I can understand where, in a citizens-initiated referendum, the question would be generated by the people of the province of Alberta, the people that want to put forward and initiate the referendum. But where I guess I’m not understanding the member from across the way is that it’s not an unusual thing, when we’ve had a referendum in this country’s history, whether federally or provincially, for the government of the day, the Premier or the council, to be able to put forward a referendum question. This is pretty standard material.

**The Speaker:** Unfortunately, the time for 29(2)(a) has expired.

Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I see the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, won’t be supporting Bill 26, Bill 27, and Bill 29, really a package of bills that will change the way local elections happen in this province and not for

the better. I, too, have confidence in the people of Alberta. I have confidence in the RMA and the AUMA, who have both taken positions on Bill 26. I will try and paraphrase what those positions are.

I'll paraphrase them by saying that both those organizations, that have been around for about a hundred years and represent together 352 local municipalities, summer villages, towns, counties throughout this province – 352 are represented by those two organizations. Just under 300 of them are with the AUMA, and the balance are with the RMA. I, too, have confidence in the people of Alberta through their local elected representatives, that have taken a position with regard to bills 26, 27, and 29, and those positions – I will paraphrase both organizations – basically say: please keep local elections and school board elections local.

They don't define local. I think we all know what that means. It means: don't impose other kinds of opportunities at the ballot box when local elections are taking place for councillors, mayors, reeves, and school board trustees. Don't clutter up the ballot with things like Bill 27, Alberta Senate Election Amendment Act, 2020. Don't bring Bill 26, the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020, to our door. Let us be local. It's amazing that the other side believes, you know, that the views of those locally elected representatives aren't really necessary, worthy, or need to be paid attention to. It's quite explicit both in the news releases and the policy position statements of both organizations, and I'll take some pains to tell you what those are. So I, too, will oppose Bill 26 because I don't think it's in the interests of those locally elected representatives, who have stated their objection.

With regard to the RMA, I took some opportunity to share the principles yesterday in Bill 29 debate in second reading. The fourth principle of the RMA clearly states: "nonpartisan and municipally-focused." They go on to elaborate, and they say:

The campaigning and election process should be designed in such a way as to ensure that candidates are focused on and accountable to the interests of their municipality as opposed to a political party or broader ideology.

It goes on below, and it says:

RMA is... monitoring Bill 26... and Bill 27... as both bills could potentially influence whether the upcoming 2021 municipal election process will also be used to facilitate province-wide referendums. RMA, along with AUMA...

And I'll get to that in a second.

... has shared concerns that using local elections as a space for senate appointments and other significant province-wide issues would detract from local issues.

Now, why do they say: "would detract from local issues"? Well, just imagine what potentially could be happening. I certainly look at page 2, that my colleague was looking at before. It says under 2(b)(iii): "in conjunction with the general elections under the Local Authorities Election Act." Clearly, there is some design to have the referenda take place at the same time as the Local Authorities Election Act, which the RMA and the AUMA have both said they're not in favour of. They don't believe – and I don't think I'm taking them out of context; I think I just read out what they feel – that that would be in the best interests of their local elections that take place every four years now in this province, and I agree with them.

4:20

I think the activities of the government to essentially push this onto local elections – and I wonder who would be paying for that. I think that in the past for previous Senate elections the province paid something with regard to the cost of those ballots taking place at the local councils but probably not all. They were probably short. The

local councils were short for the actual costs of those ballots being counted.

So that's what the RMA believes should take place. They believe that it's not in the best interests of local elections to foist referendums and Senate elections on them.

With regard to the AUMA and their response to this, it is a statement from their president in regard to fair local elections. It's June 24. They talk about local. They've taken a similar approach as the RMA, and they talk about principles that they want to see adhered to in the upcoming municipal elections and through the design of all of these bills, which don't seem to be following at this point in time their directions. They talk about local: "Local elections are dedicated to addressing locally-defined needs and issues."

Now, the way I read this bill is that their referendum questions could be on any manner of things of importance or issues of importance for Albertans. As my colleague was saying, the way it looks is that the Premier and cabinet are pretty much the decision-makers with regard to whether a question can be put to the population of Albertans either through the Local Authorities Election Act time period or a stand-alone referendum date provided to take place at some other time or indeed as part of the general election in this province, whenever that's called.

Clearly, the AUMA, which is an organization that's been around for over a hundred years, as I said, has the belief that local elections should be dedicated to addressing locally defined needs and issues like electing councillors, mayors, and reeves, like school board elections. Those are locally defined needs and issues that have to be committed to every four years now in this province.

It's important, members of the Legislature, that it not be muddled and that it not take place under a confusing set of circumstances, where people are going to the polls not thinking about who their councillor or mayor or reeve will be but thinking about, as my colleague previously pointed out, some potentially confusing question that has been part of the history of this country in the past through the Quebec referendum.

Local elections. The AUMA goes on to say – and they're speaking with regard to Bill 29 – that "some of the amendments give us pause." But they also talk about this bill, and they say that they hope that they can bring and that the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and the Minister of Municipal Affairs will bring amendments to the bill. Of course, we've not heard any amendments. At Committee of the Whole we may, and certainly there will be some from our side.

I have grave concerns that this activity that we're engaged in in debating Bill 26 in no way meets the needs of the locally elected representatives, who I think we should pay attention to. Not paying attention to them is a way of saying, "We know better than you" and "You have to facilitate something" that, really, they don't want to facilitate by the identification of the principles that they put here before us. So I am not in favour for that reason and for many other reasons. My colleagues have both taken pains to talk about how they believe that the whole third-party business, third-party advertising, is really throwing the door wide open for so many questions that Albertans will be posing about: who is involved in local elections through the referendum?

The muddying of the process of what is typically a pretty important decision we get to make every four years about who is going to represent us is something that is, frankly, surprising from legislators, that we don't have the respect of other legislators to say, "You know, you've got to facilitate this for Albertans" when they really just want to focus on the issues of their local community. It's not like there's not a ton of local issues that people want to understand how their local representative is going to deal with.

Whether it be about flood mitigation and response, as in Calgary throughout the river communities, or whether it's about, you know, how you are going to ensure that we don't kind of continue to sprawl out in the important hinterland around places like Edmonton and Calgary so that we see the kind of chewing up of really good, arable land, these are important questions that have to be decided locally. Without that focus at the local level, it will be challenging for cities, for towns, for other communities to get a hold of and do some great planning together.

I think the issue of a referendum during local elections is something that won't be a positive. It won't add value to the decision-making that needs to go on with regard to councils and school boards. For instance, at the school board level what they need to focus on is how they're going to deal with the significant challenges to their budgets that are taking place right now. We know that the government says, you know, that everything is hunky-dory with regard to education funding in this province, but that's not the experience at the local level. At the local level they want to be able to get their teeth into: okay; how do we deal with these cutbacks that we're experiencing? If we've got a referendum, say, on some question that overshadows a community's ability to really focus on what they're there for, then I think that, like the AUMA and the RMA and their views, local issues will be lost. That's the danger with Bill 26. It's the danger with Bill 27, that's before us as well.

I think the comments that are in here about the 2021 municipal elections in this province should be listened to, Mr. Speaker, but I don't really see where any attention is being paid to that, and I don't see where the respect is being shown to an order of government that is just as relevant as this order of government and just as relevant as the federal order of government. They're not a farm league. They're important. We should listen to them.

Thank you.

4:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen on Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo for his insightful comments. We do know that that member brings a lot of experience from municipal governments, being elected as councillor, alderman back then, five terms. When he's talking about issues of a local nature and local decision-making, it's essentially making the local institution, municipal government, democratically elected government stronger and better. He has identified some very critical issues that we have with this piece of legislation.

The other side just wants to get up and go on saying that, oh, we are against public participation, we are against referendums. But the thing here is that it's not about a referendum. The bill, the way it's designed, is just a power grab for this government, for this Premier because when we look at the provisions of the bill – they are stated, at least, very clearly – they clearly say that it will be in the sole discretion and sole power of the Premier, of the government, to decide whether something merits a referendum. It's not that Albertans have any say whatsoever if they want to have a referendum. It's just another power grab by this Premier to control the process of how we decide a referendum.

The problem we have with this piece of legislation is that just like Bill 10, here cabinet and the Premier are giving themselves power to decide whether anything of public importance – it doesn't matter how much the public sees anything as important. At the end of the day it's the Premier's decision. It's the Premier's judgment that something matters as a referendum.

The second thing is that when we see the question of a referendum, there's a long history around this issue, how questions in referendums can be confusing. We have seen that time and again in Canada, in the case of Quebec. We have seen that in the case of Brexit. It's a legitimate debate around the world, around the democratic world that whenever you are putting some question before the electorate, it's not always clear. Like, the Supreme Court of Canada has said on so many occasions that . . . [A cellphone rang] I understand, Premier, that if you want to deal with the charity that the donations need to go to, you can do so.

There is a scholarly debate. There is debate among those interested in the democratic process and participation that whenever you're drafting a question, it's not always cut and dry. Like, for instance, in Quebec's case the question was whether they should separate under some previous agreement; they should renegotiate a newer agreement. I can bet that people are at a different level of engagement in the political process, a different level of engagement in understanding all those complex, often very technical documents, what it means to leave a country, what it means to leave the European Union in the case of Brexit. These are often very complex and challenging things.

Then we see that the question that is the subject of the referendum is one of the most important concerns, and the concern here is that it will be decided, again, by the Premier. I think I personally don't have much faith that anything that will be decided by the Premier will not be confusing because if we talk about Calgary hail, we were told that there is some disaster relief, and later on we found out that that didn't cover hail. That was a very simple thing for the Premier to do, and that was still confusing, let alone a referendum question.

These are legitimate concerns that we are raising on behalf of our constituents and Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join the debate this afternoon? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. What's interesting is that this bill really needs to be looked at with the two other bills. There are three bills that are going to be impacting municipal elections, and all three of them are quite intertwined although they may be laid out as three separate bills, so I will talk a little bit about that.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I do appreciate hearing from my colleagues. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo is a former city councillor and so served many, many terms and, I know, has been in consultation with the rural municipality association, RMA, and also the urban municipalities through AUMA. You know, my question at the onset – and I don't know if the minister has answered this, but hopefully when we get to Committee of the Whole, he will – is if those two entities or organizations have been consulted on this, and were they given the opportunity to provide some input and feedback?

There's been some debate this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, on whether or not a referendum held at the same time as a general election for trustees and municipal councils will confuse voters. You know, maybe "confuse" is not quite the correct term, but I can tell you that I've spoken with a number of constituents, all very, very intelligent people. When you have a number of different issues to be voted on on the same ballot or at the same time, it can create – I mean, maybe "uncertainty" is not the right word, but I have spoken to voters who have said that it did create some confusion.

You know, I'll say at the onset that I'm not opposed to a referendum, not at all, and I think my colleagues on this side of the

House are not opposed to a referendum either. What the crux of many of the arguments is is how it is set up, how it's funded, and is it going to be done fairly and transparently? I think that's really the question. I mean, saying to Albertans a simple question – do you want your own police force, or do you want your own pension plan? – seems like a straight enough, direct question. I appreciate folks talking about direct democracy versus representative democracy. I talked about that all the time when I was teaching high school social studies.

For me, one interesting point about the UCP government bringing forward this legislation is, you know, the fact that for a party that is supposed to be fairly conservative when it comes to spending, referendums are not cheap. They cost a significant amount of money. I think I had heard that the Premier was talking about possibly bringing in, at some point, recall legislation. I know that this House has debated that many, many times. Again, there's a fascinating world history on recall legislation. I believe it was Winston Churchill that introduced it and then pulled it back immediately when he was about to get recalled, and that legislation lasted for a very short period of time.

Again, those types of things are a significant cost to taxpayers, so at the onset I think that that is an issue that should be fleshed out. I know that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Decore was asking the minister or someone from the government side to talk about: have you done not an economic analysis but a rough budget of what it would cost to put on a referendum? I mean, it's a valid question. I hope that we'll get an answer to that.

I think some of my colleagues' concerns around language are really, really important, and there are examples. Of course, in 1995 the Quebec referendum. I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I was in Quebec at that time. I was participating in an exchange program, which was an incredible exchange program. In fact, I wish every young person in the country had the opportunity to do that. I spent three and a half months in a small francophone town called Saint-Jérôme, living with a family there. At the time the family was hoping that the referendum outcome would be yes and that Quebec would separate. I can tell you that it was a very, very tense and stressful evening on the eve of that referendum.

4:40

It's important, I think, for us to acknowledge that language is really, really important, and the use of leading language is just that. It can lead people to a certain desired result. I think some of the concerns my colleagues and I have are that, you know, with Executive Council or just the Premier deciding on the language of the referendum question, already there very well could be a bias toward the outcome of the referendum. It is not just a simple yes or no, black or white. We've seen examples all over the world when referendums have been held that rarely is it a direct, straight question, that language is important.

I also think that part of the concern that my colleagues have – once again, it's not about whether the government of Alberta puts on a referendum. It's looking at how within this bill there are parameters around how they can be funded, how the different campaigns – the limits on how much they can be funded, who can fund them, and how transparent it is. For me, again, you know, it's a real issue.

I know that yesterday evening we talked about the Local Authorities Election Act, one of the other bills. Again, these bills need to be looked at together because if the referendum takes place at the same time as the next municipal election, you have a bunch of different legislation that is all impacting this referendum, including how much can be spent. You know, we're talking about the dollars that can be spent. In Bill 27 you have three separate

accounts, depending on how the items are held together: a limit for \$30,000 for a Senate election, \$150,000 for a general election, and \$500,000 for a referendum that can be spent by a third party.

But there are also caveats in this bill on how some of these funders don't even have to be disclosed. Mr. Speaker, for me, that is the most dangerous element or aspect of this bill. When donations don't have to be disclosed – we're talking significant donations; we're not talking \$20; we're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars or tens of thousands of dollars – it runs the risk of people trying to buy seats, trying to buy, you know, our democratic system. Again, we want and we hope that Albertans elect people who are the most qualified, that their decision is their own but that it's not unduly influenced by dollars. I mean, this is why when we formed government, our Bill 1 was our election finance reform bill, where we banned corporate and union donations because we felt that these entities should not have undue influence over the outcome of elections.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, one of my points and concerns was that you could have people with deep pockets living in a completely different part of the province basically determining the outcome or having a significant influence on the outcome of a town that they're nowhere near, that they have no business influencing who the local elected officials are in another community in our province. There's no need for that. Again, to me that's a dangerous precedent and, really an attack or an affront on the democratic rights of those local individuals and those local communities.

When we're talking about the three bills – bills 26, 27, and 29 – again, it allows third-party advertisers to have separate accounts for each of the votes going on, right? That's what I had mentioned here. Now, again, in the local elections – and I'll make this comment and come back; I appreciate the fact that we're on Bill 26, Mr. Speaker – if they register, if an individual registers for 10 or more areas, they don't have to register with the local authority, only with the provincial registrar. Again, the local authorities aren't even aware of who is funding those campaigns, where that money is coming from. To me, you know, for that reason, quite frankly, I can't support this bill.

As I had mentioned at the outset, I have no issues, no problems with referendums and the government holding a referendum, I mean, other than that I want to know how much it's costing taxpayers and, again, what is going to be the outcome of it. I've asked many times in this House when the government and the Premier are talking about a potential Alberta pension plan: "Okay. Let's talk about that. What is the cost to setting up the pension plan?"

I think what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is the argument that the government gave as to why they wanted to bring the Alberta teachers' pension into AIMCo. It was because it would have a larger block of money to be able to make trades and investments at a lower rate, and you're also able to, again, you know, bulk buy shares. They made an argument as to why that larger pool of money is better for investments.

Setting up an Alberta pension plan is the complete opposite argument of that. You're taking money out of the federal CPP, which is a significant block, and now saying: "Here, Alberta. You can manage a much smaller amount. You're going to have increased fees. You're actually going to lose money." The set-up costs of an Alberta pension plan are significant, and I'm hoping that the government will at least release or disclose what that would cost Albertans. Again, you can't ask a question like, "Do you want an Alberta pension plan?" without giving Albertans the facts on: what is it going to cost, and what are the potential returns?

You know, to use an argument like, "We don't want Ottawa managing our money," well, it's not, thankfully, the Prime Minister

that's managing it. I think we can all agree that we're happy that it's not him personally managing our dollars. The fact of the matter is that it is an entity.

I believe that it was former Premier Ralph Klein who looked into an Alberta pension plan, and he even stepped back. He did a cost-benefit analysis, and the benefit did not outweigh the costs. He said: "You know what? It would actually not make sense from a fiscal point of view to bring in an Alberta pension plan." I bring this up, Mr. Speaker, because I think that the dollars will speak for themselves.

I don't think that's the reason that this government and this Premier are bringing forward this legislation and why they want to talk to Albertans about our own police force. Again, the cost on that: I would love for the minister to talk about how expensive it would be to set up our own Alberta police force versus the shared intel and information that we have through the RCMP. What would that cost our rural and local municipalities?

Mr. Speaker, I think that those two issues are a great distraction from the real issue and why this government is bringing forward this piece of legislation. I know that the UCP is a fairly large right-wing party that has people that are more moderate and people that are more extreme. I think it's safe to say that in every political party you have differences of opinions. I know for a fact that in their party there are individuals who would like to see Alberta separate from Canada. That's been made clear on lots of different social media platforms. Now, I know that the Premier has said that he is a federalist and a nationalist and not a separatist. I'm not about to put words into his mouth or try to argue differently.

[The Speaker in the chair]

What this looks like, to me, is an effort to placate and silence the separatists that possibly exist within the party, within this Chamber – I said "possibly" – as well as those that are within the UCP. By giving them this referendum of a potential Alberta pension plan or maybe an Alberta police force, you know, maybe that will keep them quiet, keep them part of the party. I mean, there are lots of rumours going on about new right-wing parties popping up. We know that there are people that are part of that Wexit movement that are members of the governing – I can't say "the governing party," but they're members of the political party of the government.

For me, that's where I see, really, the root of where this is coming from, a way to silence them as opposed to saying: "You know what? It doesn't make sense from a financial point of view either to have an Alberta pension plan which will be a fraction of the size of a Canadian pension plan. It's going to be costly to set up. It's unlikely to get necessarily the returns that the Canada pension plan has." If it doesn't make sense – and, I mean, this is why I'm asking my friends on the other side of the House to provide the numbers. You know, for a party, again, that is supposedly fiscally conservative, they're proposing two different things that are going to cost taxpayers a lot of money.

4:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I know the hon. Member for Peace River has been very keen to get in on the 29(2)(a) debate.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in response to my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. He opened his comments with the idea that he's spoken to a number of constituents, a few, he mentioned, that have at times been – and he did settle on the word "confused" with what they were voting on at times. To be fair, I've

spoken to members of this Chamber who are confused with what they're voting on.

What we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is that we're essentially saying that just as when you vote on legislation here – and Bill 26 is a perfect example. I believe the hon. colleague from across the way did not contribute to the drafting of this legislation. I could be corrected if he has, but I highly doubt that the Minister of Justice has solicited the language from the members opposite. Nonetheless, they rise day after day in this Legislature, as is their duty to their constituents, they articulate their views, and they vote. They vote over and over and over again, nonstop.

I do not think – and I don't think the member opposite would disagree – that he's necessarily much more intelligent than the average constituent that he has, that he probably is, you know, someone of comparable ability to anyone else. There's no special wisdom, no special insight that he has over his constituents. He represents their views well. Nonetheless, he thinks that he can vote on government legislation, which is much more complex than a question on a referendum, and he thinks that he's totally capable of that, but he does not want to let the government put forward a question that his constituents can answer directly. That's too far.

He continues in his speech to bring up questions of: maybe referendums cost too much, and we're too fiscally conservative to do it. Well, Mr. Speaker, our democracy cannot be bought even by a Trudeau-sized budget. The fact is that if it costs money to solicit the opinion of our constituents, of Albertans, the government of the United Conservatives will do so.

They seem to want to suck and blow at the same time, as my friends in northern Alberta say. They say that it costs too much, but they're all concerned about too much money in politics, the so-called dark money. They say, quote: the dollars will speak for themselves. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times we have to say it: the voters can speak for themselves in a direct referendum where they get to say what they want to say in response to it. It's not about dollars and cents. It shouldn't matter how much a referendum costs on an important issue. Those important issues do exist. They exist, and the question of separation that the member brought up is a genuine one.

When it comes to our democracy, if there are sentiments of separation, I want to keep Canada whole. I know our Premier does. I know the members opposite do. I don't question the sincerity in their belief there. But I will say that if they plan on hiding the conversation from Albertans by not letting them have access to a direct referendum, then they will make situations worse rather than better. The fact is that in spite of these frustrations – and it's not about keeping members in any one party. It's about keeping our province in Canada. That's why we need to go to voters directly. That's why they need to feel like they have direct access, because ultimately they might think there's some political game at play.

What this is is the most earnest, heartfelt attempt by this government and this Premier to say: we need to keep this country together. Alberta is the beating soul of Canada in terms of our economic, entrepreneurial opportunity, a culture of pioneering. That is something important that Canada needs.

If the members opposite want to oppose referenda because they think that somehow it's distorting the view of the electorate, they're welcome to it, but I could not find a councillor, a reeve, a mayor that I know in my constituency – and I'm happy to have any of them oppose me – who says that somehow a referendum is taking away their ability to do their job. I would like to speak to those individuals. I would like to have a debate with them at the Manning agriculture society and see if their voters agree that empowering the voters over the elected officials municipally or provincially is somehow taking away their rights. I couldn't disagree more.

I think that when we had the speech from my hon. colleague earlier, that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview spoke on, surrounding municipalities and the RMA's and the AUMA's positions on this, it was clear that he has not spoken to many representatives in Alberta that I know of. There could be a small number of urban representatives that are concerned about more voters, but that's nothing to be afraid of in a democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate at second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have not spoken to Bill 26 yet, so I am happy to do so although I must say that I have a lot of concerns about this bill. You know, most recently I was able to speak to Bill 28, and I was able to share my support with a caveat, of course. But on Bill 26, after reading it fairly closely and doing a little bit of analysis, I'm troubled by much of it. I'd like to echo some of the comments of my colleagues, and I'd also like to take on a few comments that were made by members on the government side.

I think I'd like to start by expressing my deep concern that this bill seems to be a distraction. This bill seems to be unnecessary. I certainly welcome more government members getting up and speaking about this, and I certainly welcome them countering my points on this. I'll tell you that I'm pretty known for being fairly active in my riding, you know, and while we've not been door-knocking due to COVID, I've been engaging with constituents in many other ways: phone calls, Zoom meetings, physically/socially distanced meetings, neighbourhood walks, garbage cleanups. I've been doing a lot of neighbourhood garbage cleanups. I'm not telling you that to toot my own horn. I'm telling you that to say that I hear from a lot of constituents first-hand.

I also hear from a whole heck of a lot of Albertans from all across this province on social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. I'm pretty active on all those platforms, and I get a lot of messages from folks who don't live in my riding. [A cellphone rang] Okay. I will continue despite that interruption.

**An Hon. Member:** A musical interlude.

**Member Irwin:** That's right, that interlude from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I thought I'd better get him on *Hansard* just so it's clear for the records.

Where was I going with that? Yes. I was speaking about the fact that on social media I get a lot of messages from folks who do not reside within the lovely riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I just had some messages today, and if anyone doubts me, they can come look at my DMs. Folks from Stony Plain, Beaumont, Calgary: those are just some recent ones that I've responded to. My point in framing my arguments this way is to tell you that out of the thousands of conversations I've had, whether they be online or face to face, I've not had someone tell me that there's a need for a referendum. I've not had folks share with me the need for what we have before us in Bill 26.

I should be clear. I've had a question quite regularly – and I'm sure many of my colleagues have had this question as well – from folks who've asked: how do we stop this government? Is there any way to oust them prior to 2023? Obviously, the social studies teacher in me likes to then explain to them how the process works and, you know, that there are not a lot of tools to remove this government prior to 2023. I'm not sharing any state secrets in my answer, of course, to questions like that.

5:00

**Member Ceci:** Or you can be a member.

**Member Irwin:** That's true.

To get engaged. Again, that's the social studies teacher in me promoting active, engaged citizenship, which is, of course, a tenet to our social studies program, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon know quite well from being social studies teachers.

But I do tell them there's one way that we can bring about that change, and it's by getting involved, it's by speaking out, it's by becoming more politically active in our party, and it's by reaching out to your MLAs, your UCP MLAs, asking for meetings, calling them, e-mailing them. The list goes on. My point is that I hear from a lot of folks, but I haven't heard – and I'm not lying. I have not heard once about the need for what lies before us in Bill 26.

Well, what have I heard? I've heard a whole heck of a lot of – I started to kind of summarize the themes of the issues that I'm hearing, the issues where, I guess, if folks are going to have to undergo the process of referendum, maybe these are some of the issues they'd like to address. Health care is a big one, absolutely: attacks on publicly funded health care; the moves to privatization, privatization of lab services, for instance; the attacks on doctors. Again, I'm talking about hearing from rural Albertans in particular, having grown up in rural Alberta and having spent a lot of time there. That's a fact. Education: a lot of concerns about education, about funding, most recently about attacks on teachers and their pensions. AISH, supports for folks with disabilities. Parks, attacks on our natural heritage. Child care.

**Member Ceci:** All provincial responsibilities.

**Member Irwin:** All provincial responsibilities, absolutely.

Supports for women, having their voices centred in the economic recovery. CPP: I'm hearing a lot about CPP but not in the sense that folks want a referendum on it, in the sense that they want to remain a part of the CPP and that they're not asking for this. You know, again, I'm welcoming some of the members opposite who are speaking about this. Hopefully, they will get up and add to debate, and I'm sure they'll say that they are hearing this from their constituents. I won't dispute the veracity of that if they say so. Again, I'm speaking from my perspective as the MLA for the lovely riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

I can tell you, as I shared in the House the other day, that I just spent some time in the Wainwright area, around the beautiful lakes of Wainwright. If you don't know, there are some really, really beautiful lakes out there. I was just talking with some folks out there who are, admittedly, you know – they love me, but they aren't NDP supporters, and that's okay. But interesting that they brought up what we talked about. You can't go anywhere without talking politics. I'm sure it's the same for many folks in this room. You try to get away and have a relaxing break, but you end up talking politics, and that's okay. That's the job we signed up for, absolutely. But folks that are admittedly not NDP supporters were saying, like: why the heck are the UCP going after CPP, right? Again, I think about my dad, who is also in rural Alberta. He loves his daughter, but he's not always the biggest fan of the NDP. Same thing. I like to use him as kind of a barometer of folks in rural Alberta.

Again, I just talk about the interactions that I've had in various parts of rural Alberta lately. Again, my question is: we're not hearing this, and I question why the need for this piece of legislation when we've got all these pieces, all these huge, fundamental issues that our province is facing, you know? We're in the midst of a pandemic, absolutely, and that should be calling upon each of us as

legislators to really examine what's important, what's critical, what do we need to be moving on.

Let me talk a little bit more about some of the key pieces. I kind of framed my perspective on the need for this piece of legislation, and again I welcome members opposite to stand up and tell me more about what they're hearing from their constituents. I want to talk about some of the other concerns. My colleague has spoken to this quite well, including my esteemed colleague from Calgary-Buffalo, who, you know, as has been noted today, has a long history as a city councillor in Calgary. He's able to draw upon that experience and the relationships that he's made over the years having been in that role, so I truly respect his perspective when he talks about his grave concerns around bills 26, 27, 29.

As the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview pointed out, it's very difficult to sort of piecemeal approach these bills because they are so interrelated, a key example being if a referendum is to come up in the next municipal election. Obviously, again, that has connections to what we see in bills 27 and 29 as well. Both bills 26 and 27 allow hundreds of thousands of dollars to be raised and to be spent to influence public opinion on political matters, with, a concern that's been raised, limited oversight and transparency and only – only – with the Premier's permission.

Now, again, I don't need to stand up here and – although I do miss teaching, and I particularly miss teaching high school social studies – explain to you the value of a referendum and how, you know, it's a great example of direct democracy, blah, blah, blah. You all know that. Actually, even in the Alberta program for social studies 6 that comes up. We should all be very aware of the role of referenda.

However, I'm curious. When I heard – I'm quite certain I heard it this way, and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview also heard it quite clearly from the Member for Peace River, who said something along the lines of: the cost shouldn't matter. I don't have the benefit of the Blues yet, but, you know, that was the essence of what he stated. Gosh. I've stood in this House multiple times and talked about how proud I am to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and the absolutely beautiful diversity within it, but I've noted as well that there are some challenges, and I meet a lot of folks who are struggling, right? We have some of the highest rates of child poverty in our riding, and we have a lot of folks who are struggling every single day to make ends meet. So when I hear a member say that the cost shouldn't matter, gosh. Five hundred thousand dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars on a referendum, when . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** They should put that to a vote of the rest of their members: do they all agree with that?

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely. Perhaps it was a slip of the tongue and perhaps that member will come back and clarify what he meant. But let me tell you what hundreds of thousands of dollars would mean for that single parent who is struggling in my riding. [interjections] I'm being heckled right now. I hope the member from Fort McMurray will stand up and share those concerns in the House. [interjection] Excellent. Can't wait. [interjections] Oh, boy. Yes, that is a fair concern.

I don't even know where I was. I lost my train of thought there.

But on a serious point, you know, the point is that for the Member for Peace River to state that the cost doesn't matter is quite concerning. Tell that to the single mother who's struggling to make ends meet in my riding. In fact, I had a message from a mother earlier today, who is a mother of two – I might get the details incorrect, but I'll check on my Facebook in a moment here – who was an EA and lost her job, and she also just learned that she's lost

the Alberta child benefit. She doesn't know how she's going to pay her bills.

**5:10**

I can't imagine the slap in the face that that is to her for her to hear: "You know what? We don't have money." This UCP government doesn't have money to bolster the Alberta child benefit, but they have money for a referendum that she and a whole heck of a lot of people, at least in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, are not asking for.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I believe I saw the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland rise first.

**Mr. Getson:** Fourth time is the charm, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. I appreciate the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. If we're talking about referendums, again, out in our community – and I appreciate that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has taken e-mails from a few different constituencies across the province. With this whole recent election thing and me getting vocal on a few stages and the social media, it's amazing how many comments I get, and it's not just from my own area either. It's across Canada. I mean, this message starts to get out there. The seriousness of what we're talking about: with a lot of the references being made here, I'm not sure if it's meant to, you know, elicit emotion or to give some cognitive ability or concerns about what might happen if.

Let's just go down that rabbit hole a bit. What would happen if we put together a Fair Deal Panel and we went across the province and we put up a web page and it became a national news story that actually had people putting their comments and their feedback to you? Then what would happen if we had a COVID event that took place that kind of derailed what the original plans were a bit? Then what would happen if you had a bunch of feedback and then everyone was wanting the details of this report? Well, all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, we have the details of this report out, and some of the items that the members are fixated on here were actually in that report that they were requesting and demanding at one point that they wanted to come forward.

Again, this wasn't a partisan item. It wasn't just my constituents, you know, the 68 or 70 per cent that picked me over the former Ag and Forestry minister, who had all the consultation out there and who was from the former government party. This was right across the whole province. They went to each region, and each region has their own type of – I don't know – feel or flavour, I guess, of what matters to them. One of the items that came up was the CPP. That was one of the items that came up, as was the energy corridor, as were a bunch of other items. From the fact that we're contemplating that potentially this matters so much that we wouldn't want to make that decision in isolation and given that we are in a democratic society and given that referendums seem to have a pretty good turnout, no different than we had with the Fair Deal Panel and the solicitation and what people get from social media, maybe that question should be put to folks.

I've heard a lot of reasons: "Oh, my gosh, there might be money spent, and it actually might influence people." Yeah, well, there's money spent every single day on the television, radio, et cetera, that influences people, and we hear lots of partisan groups that come out and talk about that on the radio, whether it's the teachers' pension, whether it's the AFL, whether it's this Gil McGowan fellow, that I hope to meet someday.

**Mr. Bilous:** We can set it up.

**Mr. Getson:** I would love that.

There's tons of information that's out there that might sway or influence the voters, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? I like the fact that the voters are savvy enough that they can read through the BS and cut through the buckwheat and everything else we want to use out there and they actually make their own decision. The fact that when we have something important enough to have a referendum to do it, absolutely, that's something that I would support. That's what I hear across the country, and that's what I hear from my constituents and also from people that are potentially in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

As an example, if we were going to suppose and go down that rabbit hole, let's say, for example, that I abut the city of Edmonton, which I do, and now with this social media presence, why is it that I keep getting called by the Chinese business community to go down to Chinatown and talk to those folks because they don't have any representation from their MLAs? They had massive concerns over the harm reduction sites. They had massive concerns over what's happening with their businesses, and they're not getting representation. They even had petitions that weren't heard. They were essentially, in their own words, steamrolled over by their own local municipal councillors. When I'm having engagement with them, I'm telling them that politics matters. The advertisements that you might be reading and hearing out there may not be representative of the truth. You have to dig in yourself and do it. If you want to get people out there, you've got to get involved, no different than what the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood had pointed out. I'm getting calls from, potentially, her area because those folks aren't being heard there either.

With this, having a referendum, you're going to have people that actually show up and care. You know what happens when people show up and care? They have better representation because we're getting more people to show up that are more representative of the area. If we put something critical on that ballot because we feel that the Alberta people should make that choice, not just us as democratic representation or at that level but more of a democratic item where it's direct democracy, they can put that X beside what matters to them.

More people show up, and if somebody – well, somebody was mentioning the Calgary mayor. So let's say, for example, down that rabbit hole more people showed up and didn't vote him in. Maybe that's an unintended consequence that is actually better representative of the province. So if that's something that comes out of a referendum, yes, some of the members opposite might be a little concerned because the Alberta people will get a chance to speak again. I think that's really the biggest concern.

When we get to it, the more people that come out and show up and vote, the more of a chance we have that the direct items that come up and make sense for them ... [interjections] That's why they're heckling, and that's why they're nervous.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted under 29(2)(a).

Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate for second reading this evening? Anyone else?

If not, I am prepared to ask if the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General would like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a second time]

### Bill 28

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

[Debate adjourned July 7: Ms Ganley speaking]

**The Speaker:** Is there anyone that would like to provide comments at second reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's an honour to rise to speak to legislation before the House, in this instance Bill 28, the Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020. I did have a short opportunity to speak to this legislation a few days ago in response to the Member for St. Albert, who raised several important points through the debate on this legislation. I appreciate their comments on this bill and every other bill as they reflect on their experience with people with disabilities and much more than that, of course. I always respect their opinion and appreciate the thoughts that they put into the debate.

You know, the member had raised some important points in recognizing the high rate of sexual violence toward those with disabilities, and I would like to just quickly take a moment to quote from that member's speech.

Very often ... that abuse comes at the hands of caregivers, often family members, who they're reliant on. Sometimes it is staff. They're left picking up the pieces afterwards. This is a group that typically, when they do work, don't have high-paying jobs. Often they rely on things like assured income for the severely handicapped or income support, and that means a life of poverty.

I can appreciate those comments because when we reflect on the power that is given to people in our society to take care of those with disabilities or other segments of our population, it is incredibly important, you know, with the power and the authority that they're given over other people potentially, that we do everything in our power to ensure that we are protecting those people.

Once again, it's incredibly important for us as legislators to do our best to create an environment through legislation and any other means necessary to protect people in our society from violence of any nature. We see today before this House Bill 28, a piece of legislation that this government claims will close loopholes that are currently in place that allow convicted sex offenders to change their names. If that is indeed the case – and I would take the minister's word for it who prepared this legislation for us, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the Minister of Service Alberta – I appreciate that we're making movement on this. Whether it's a small or a big loophole, if there are people taking advantage of this in any respect, it needs to be closed. So I appreciate that that minister is bringing this forward. While we might not always agree on legislation that comes forward from this government, in this instance I can appreciate that even if it's a small step forward in Bill 28, I think it's an important one.

5:20

Just looking once again at the press release that the government put out, it stated: "Alberta already has some of the strongest [legal requirements] around name changes," including submitting "an RCMP fingerprint confirmation letter." So while we already have some of the strongest legislation and legal requirements for name changes, I'm still happy that if there are instances where this is happening, we are working to make sure it can no longer happen. So I appreciate that this is being brought forward. Once again, if we can protect even one person from being victimized or being further victimized through these acts, then I think that there is value in what is being brought forward by the minister.

Just quickly, the press release went on to state that previous requirements within the act did not prevent sex offenders from being able to change their names and by closing this loophole the government is taking a simple step.

I had raised some questions that I had through 29(2)(a), and I think some of my colleagues have raised concerns as well just



around exactly what the loophole was potentially and, if there were circumstances where this loophole was taken advantage of, what actions are being taken by the minister, depending on which minister it's affecting, to rectify the fact that this was happening. I think in many cases we have other registry services that were watching these sorts of things and ensuring that this wasn't the case, but I would appreciate any clarification where this might not have been the case, specifically around the registry being updated and ensuring that the federal registry is strong enough to continue doing important work of what we're asking for in this legislation.

You know, the fact is that someone who has experienced sexual violence has to live with that for the rest of their lives – and this point has been brought up – and someone who's convicted of these acts should not have the ability to change their name to erase their own past.

I must reflect also on some of the recent changes that we've seen in other legislation, and some of my colleagues have brought up this fact as well. It's not lost on me that, on one hand, we have taken a step forward, and I appreciate that through Bill 28 we are taking action to protect survivors and protect the general public from concerns about convicted sex offenders being able to change their name; on the other hand, in legislation that we've seen before this House over the last few weeks, Bill 16, we've seen this government moving money from the victims of crime fund. That's very concerning for us because, you know, we see this government once again, on one hand, supporting these survivors through measures like Bill 28, but on the other hand we're losing transparency in terms of how money in that victims of crime fund is being spent. There is a large amount of money there that should be earmarked entirely, if not the majority of it, for exactly that, victims of crime. Unfortunately, what we've heard from this minister is not the case. There was no commitment for that money to continue in that direction. We heard from the minister that some of that money may be spent on prosecuting and some of that money may be spent on policing. That's very concerning for us because that money should be reinvested into what it was originally intended for.

Further to that point, while I recognize the importance of funding prosecutors and funding police officers in our communities – and we look once again to the concerns about crime in rural communities, but this same Justice minister is changing the agreements that we the province have made with municipalities about how they get their funding and how that funding is spent. While the minister stood up in these communities and said that more money would be going to these municipalities or that more police officers specifically would be going to these municipalities, there was no commitment to extra funding. We found out later that these municipalities not only would lose extra funding from traffic infractions, but they would actually have to come up with extra money to pay for these new officers. So the minister, as we've seen in other decisions from this government, has actually made the decision to make an announcement without the municipalities actually fully understanding how that announcement would be funded.

You know, I look to the decision of this government, first, through our decision as an NDP government to bring forward the big-city charter and promise to fund municipalities, maybe not to a level that the municipalities wanted in terms of Edmonton and Calgary, but we came to an agreement, based on the economic climate, that would be a balanced approach. Unfortunately, even though this UCP government also campaigned on supporting that big-city charter, also stood in this Legislature when we brought it forward and said that they planned on supporting it, when it came time to actually put their money where their mouth is and support the decisions that they committed to, this government went back on

that promise. And we saw the mayor of Calgary actually stand up and rip up the agreement that it was written on, saying that it was worthless, which is very frustrating.

With that being said, how it ties back is that with that funding being cut, now municipalities are being asked to pay or find ways to pay for policing because that money is disappearing from a commitment that this provincial government made, whether that money would traditionally go directly to policing. All of a sudden we have infrastructure money taken away, we have community support money being taken away, and the municipalities have to make decisions. Those decisions come in one of two ways: either cuts to services, which in some cases it was contemplated and moved forward on, that policing services would be cut, or else they have to raise taxes.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

#### Point of Order Relevance

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to raise a point of order here under 23(b)(i), speaks to matters other than the question under discussion. Obviously, this is Bill 28. The member has been off topic for quite some time now. This bill is Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020, and the member has been talking about municipal finances and different things like that. I would suggest that the member get back on topic at this point.

**The Speaker:** The hon. deputy Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This isn't a point of order. The member knows that. There is a great amount of latitude that you yourself, Mr. Speaker, have given members in this place. As is the history with members speaking to a bill, the member is talking about dollars. I think he's referencing the victims of crime fund and where the money would go for the supports, which ties directly back to this bill. For those points, this is just a mild interruption in a very compelling speech that the member was giving.

**The Speaker:** I'd like to thank both members for their submissions to the point of order. I would agree with the deputy Official Opposition House Leader that this is not a point of order, particularly in light of the fact that the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has yet to bring any of his points to this particular matter of debate. Providing the member with a fairly wide swath of ability to bring the voice of his constituents here to the Chamber, particularly at second reading, I think, is very reasonable.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm feeling quite special today because I believe that was probably the fourth or fifth point of order that I've been called on. I appreciate that.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

And I appreciate the fact that, once again, this is an incredibly important bill. Even if it supports one person who is concerned about the fact that there may be loopholes in the original legislation that this is amending, if there's even one person out there in Alberta that feels safer because of this change, then I think that it's worth looking at and supporting. Once again, while I have grave concerns

about the general direction of this government to take funds from the victims of crime fund, which would traditionally support people who are also potentially affected by Bill 28 – I have grave concerns about that, specifically from the stakeholder groups that have come forward that traditionally support these survivors. At this point I believe that Bill 28 is a step in the right direction. I appreciate the people that came forward to consult the government on it, and I respect that the government made these changes.

With that being said, once again I would thank the minister for bringing this forward. I hope that more is done to support survivors of these heinous crimes. With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:30

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park has risen.

**Mr. Walker:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise under 29(2)(a), following the comments of my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday in response, broadly speaking, on Bill 28, the vital statistics amendment act. I'm so happy and supportive of this great bill. I just wanted to talk about two comments that my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday made in his speech, where he focused on the importance of protecting the most vulnerable and closing any loopholes at all, and I thought those were really excellent comments. That is a major focus of this bill.

I just also want to say that I really appreciate overall the tenor and the tone of the debate in this House for Bill 28. It goes across partisan lines, as does protecting the most vulnerable, especially as regards protecting Albertans from convicted sex offenders, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, this bill does close a loophole by preventing people from changing their name here in Alberta if they're convicted of a sexual offence of a specific nature. They will not be eligible for a legal change of name in Alberta to hide their past criminal convictions. I think that all of us in the House can agree with that, and I again thank the Member for Edmonton-West Henday for making those points and being agreeable to all of those points in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes in the Vital Statistics Act would require anyone 18 years of age or older to submit to a criminal background check as part of their application to change their name. We were elected on a platform to protect the most vulnerable and to protect Albertans across this province, so this bill ties directly to our platform to keep Albertans safe and build safe communities. These amendments, Mr. Speaker, will further strengthen our commitments to helping survivors of sexual assaults by ensuring that convicted sex offenders cannot hide in our communities under new names, as we know has been happening. There have been some recorded cases mentioned in the House regarding this debate lately on this.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, these amendments also, Mr. Speaker, will help fulfill indirectly the stated intention of another promise our government made upon election, that of requiring annual reporting about crimes committed by persons on bail, on probation, on parole, et cetera. We believe and I think everyone in this House believes that we must protect as best we can everyone in Alberta, including our most vulnerable and including survivors of sexual assault.

The Member for Edmonton-West Henday also brought up possible loopholes that will exist beyond the ones we're closing here, like assumed names as well as people crossing jurisdictions. I just want to be clear – and I'm glad we're in agreement, Mr.

Speaker, on this – that we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. This bill will move the goalposts forward in a positive way for strengthening protections for Albertans by ensuring that anyone convicted of a specific sexual offence will not be eligible for a legal name change to hide their past criminal convictions.

Now, the Minister of Service Alberta will be leading an effort across Canada to convince other ministers and governments in other provinces and territories to take up the strengthening of the protections that we're including in Bill 28. I know that he has been in discussions with the government of Saskatchewan very positively, and Nova Scotia and Ontario were looking at what we're doing and looking to strengthen as well. We will look to close that loophole where they can jump from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. We certainly need to close that.

As well, I would also like to say that there have been some powerful stakeholders who have been supportive of Bill 28, Mr. Speaker, including Mr. Sheldon Kennedy. I remember that he came to my junior high, I think it was – it might have been high school – to speak about his experiences and what we need to do to support survivors of sexual abuse, especially children. In supporting this bill, Mr. Sheldon Kennedy says, "This legislation takes an important step forward for survivors by better recognizing the lifelong impacts they face and making their offenders face the consequence of their actions daily."

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 28, the Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020, in second reading. This is my first time speaking to this bill. I've enjoyed listening to the debate, and I can say that I, too, am in support of this piece of legislation going forward. I think it's a good first step in tying up some loopholes when it comes to sex offenders and making them accountable for their crimes.

We know that there are many ways that a sex offender can try and hide in plain sight, and changing their name is one of them. I'm curious, however, how this was determined to be an issue. The Premier himself has indicated that it's not something that's been tracked. We know that there are already checks and balances in place in terms of a national registry, and there's an expectation that the registry be consulted prior to allowing a name change. I'm curious if people have been prevented in the past from changing their name based on that information coming to light. However, we are here, and this is a place of progress in looking at how sex offenders do face consequences when it comes to the horrific acts that they have done on people.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me, I would like to kind of discuss some of the other things that I've heard come up in this debate regarding this piece of legislation from members of government, and while I think their intentions were positive and well intended, for sure, I think there's some clarity that needs to occur when it comes to what we're talking about today.

I've heard numerous times members get up and say how impactful this piece of legislation would be because they are parents to girls. We know that victims of sexual assault can be all genders. It's not limited to girls. We know that there are sex offenders that definitely offend on girls, but they also offend on boys. There are hate crimes that go after members specifically in the trans community. It's not a gender-specific assault, so to rise in the House and say that they're worried because of their female children, I think, is a little bit of a disservice to understanding that sexual

assaults can happen to anyone. Male, female, transgender: however you identify, you are not exempt from sexual assault. Having that misconception that because your children are female, they're higher risk: yes, statistically they are higher risk, but as a social worker I've worked first-hand with many young victims that were male. Unfortunately, this is something that occurs, and I just wanted to have on the record that parents shouldn't just be worried about their female children. It's something that can happen to anybody.

The other piece that I'm hearing is that this would provide a sense, a feeling of safety. While I know as a survivor knows that their offender could change their name, this absolutely, one hundred per cent will provide a sense of safety for that person. It will allow them to know that their offender has been named, can't change their name, and forever has to live with that consequence.

The unfortunate piece of this is that offenders, like I've mentioned, can be quite creative when it comes to their identity, so there's absolutely no way that we can legislate them being honest about their real name. I've seen it in my practice many, many times, where a bad guy or woman enters the picture, and they use a different identity. Working in Children's Services, we would have families that have a new partner enter their family. They provide a different name, and it's not until thorough background checks, that even I as a social worker was having to do, that we were able to identify who this individual was. When I hear stories that, you know, having a new person move into their community and knowing their name and not having the ability to change that name gives a sense of security, I wouldn't recommend that people rely on that as just feeling safe.

5:40

There's so much more that needs to happen in terms of making sure that individuals are safe in their communities. One of the things that can be done, through my background and my education in social work and protecting children from sexual abuse, is to start to teach children the anatomically correct names for all of their body parts, something that, unfortunately, some parents, some educators have concerns about when talking about body parts. We're quick to identify head, shoulder, knees, and toes without a giggle, without a feeling of shame, without getting red, but when we start talking about vaginas and penises, there's a sense of discomfort.

That's something as a society that we need to talk about because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when trying to take a disclosure from a four-year-old that is trying to explain to me that they have been penetrated and they don't know the body part name, it's hard to get a conviction out of that. When we're looking at getting convictions of sex offenders and preventing them from changing their names, we need to also make sure that we're getting convictions of sex offenders so that they can be on this list and we know who they are. Unfortunately, there are some huge barriers when it comes to getting these matters to court and getting them actually convicted.

There's another sense of safety in the feeling that they ran a police record check, like is being required in Bill 28, before they're allowed to apply for a name change. Unfortunately, that record check could come clear because they've never been convicted. It's another false sense of safety that people need to understand. Just because we're stopping convicted sex offenders from changing their names – there are still so many things in our system that are preventing those actual offenders from being charged.

When we look at all of the issues that are happening – I appreciate that this is a piece of legislation that is intended to make people feel safe, to feel valid in their pain, and to prevent their offender from being able to live somewhat of a sheltered life by changing their

identity. I think those are all wonderful reasons for moving forward with this piece of legislation.

I do worry about other impacts on victims, and we've seen in this Chamber as recently as Bill 16, which was Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act, 2020, that money was taken away from victims and redistributed to cover some of the cuts that this government has made. When we talk about supporting victims, we need to look at the big picture. Yes, this piece of legislation, Bill 28, is a start, and it's something that seems like a logical fit. However, if we truly want to support a victim, there's so much more that needs to happen. We need to listen to the victims and the survivors and what they're telling us. What we know is that they need support. They need access to that, and sometimes that comes prior to conviction.

When we're looking at what the reporting rate is of someone who's experienced sexual violence, depending on whether they were believed or not, that has a huge impact on whether it gets from telling the first person, that initial disclosure, to making its way to police. There are so many barriers that are in place to even getting that person to initially talk about what had happened to them, and by cutting funds, we're impacting survivors of sexual violence.

We as opposition suggested numerous amendments that would actually strengthen and support victims of crime; however, this government didn't listen. We had members of the victims of crime organizations come forward and express their concerns. We've had survivors of sexual violence come forward and express their concerns, yet this government didn't move far enough to make actual change, and we heard that survivors still don't feel that enough has been done.

While this is a great first step, I worry that so much more needs to be done. We need to make sure that the current checks that we have in place are working, like the national registry. If there is some concern with that, I would hope that government has followed up to see what that barrier was, because there already is a resource in place that allows registries to reach out through vital statistics to access that national registry. They're already able to prevent the name change. It's their discretion. This enhances their ability. This makes it very clear about what the expectation is when a sex offender is applying for a name change. However, I think that there are other questions that need to be answered. What are those solutions?

I know part of the experience that I had as a caseworker – when it comes to a criminal record check, we've done background checks on individuals, and there is one individual specifically that I can think of that had a horrific background check. Unfortunately, at some point in time he was granted a pardon, so when we pulled the background check, it came back clear. He happened to be in court. One of the sheriffs was a retired detective, recognized him, knew him, and knew the record. We were able to dig and get some information. There are still barriers in place in our legal system that are allowing these predators to be shadowed within our communities. Looking at all of those different things that are impacting how a survivor feels safe is absolutely essential, and I think looking at the vital statistics piece of it is an easy fix. It makes sense, but it's not everything that needs to be done.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am supporting this. I would hope all members of the Legislature support this and continue to look at other ways in which we can support survivors of sexual violence.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or a comment.

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate?  
The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 28, the vital statistics amendment act, 2020. I think I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. We certainly will be supporting this piece of legislation because we believe that survivors of sexual assault deserve our support. As somebody mentioned, I heard – I don't know if I heard here in the Legislature or somewhere – that often the survivors of sexual violence have to live with that trauma, have to live with those scars forever. I think it's fair that those offenders at least be made to live with that name and not be allowed to change that name, so it's a good piece of legislation.

I think when we were in government, our record over the four years had been very clear, that we have taken many steps to support the survivors and to make sure that they have the supports they need to rebuild their lives as much as they can. I can talk about some of those things. We committed as government \$8.1 million to sexual assault services and supports for survivors through the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. That was one of the most significant investments that was made in that area after a long time, and that certainly increased their capacity to provide those services that increased their ability to respond to the needs of survivors in a more timely fashion.

5:50

Then we also made a number of structural changes as well, making sure that survivors feel supported and they have the supports they need. Prior to us becoming government, there was a time limit for the survivors to file a civil lawsuit, and they could do so within two years of the incident. The MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, the then Justice minister, brought forward a piece of legislation removing the two-year limit and essentially recognizing that these decisions for survivors are not easy when they want to pursue lawsuits, when they want to come out and talk about it personally. These are very personal decisions for them, and they should come forward on their own terms and not on the basis of some kind of arbitrary and unfair deadline imposed by the legal system.

Then we also worked with child advocacy centres around the province; for instance, the Zebra Child Protection Centre here in

Edmonton, that supports and provides services to victims and survivors who are children. We were able to support their work by adding \$1.2 million so that they're able to provide the services that they're providing to survivors.

Also, I think there were a number of other changes. One bill that comes to mind is a private member's bill that was brought forward by former MLA Deb Drever, the safer spaces legislation, that was allowing the victims and survivors of domestic violence to break their lease and flee their homes, I guess, more easily and not worry about those consequences and seek safety and seek the services that they need to rebuild their lives.

Then we also worked with law enforcement and police agencies on establishing and publishing the best practices guidelines for those investigating sexual assault cases. Then we also created a phone line to report abuse and support the survivors and victims of abuse. These were some of the things. Then we also recognized and proclaimed May as Sexual Violence Awareness Month. This is a file that as government we have certainly paid attention to. That was a priority for our government, to support survivors.

This piece of legislation will strengthen, I guess, that support system for the survivors by making sure that those that violate an individual's being, violate their rights, leave them scarred for life, shouldn't be able to change their name. Our caucus and I will be supporting this piece of legislation. We certainly may have some more questions and suggestions at the committee stage, but at this point I will take my seat and thank the hon. minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

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

Seeing none, is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? I am prepared to call the question if there is no one else looking to join in the debate or call upon the minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 7:30 tonight.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]





## Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests .....	1829
Members' Statements	
Government Achievements .....	1829
Calgary Office Vacancy Rate .....	1829
Agriculture in Southern Alberta Highway 3 Capital Plan.....	1829
Government Policies .....	1830
Transportation Capital Projects .....	1830
High School Capacity in Edmonton-Meadows.....	1830
Cycling Safety .....	1831
Bill 32.....	1831
Economic Recovery.....	1831
Oral Question Period	
Invest Alberta Corporation and Job Creation .....	1831
Bill 32.....	1832
Bill 32 Labour Relations Code Amendments .....	1833, 1834
Bill 32 Employment Standards Code Amendments.....	1833
Bill 32 and Youth Employment Standards .....	1835
Texas Agent General Appointment .....	1835
Coal Development Policies .....	1836
Public Health Act Review .....	1836
Persons with Disabilities' Workforce Participation.....	1837
Calgary Storm Damage Costs.....	1837
Site Rehabilitation Program.....	1838
School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding .....	1838
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees .....	1839
Presenting Petitions .....	1839
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 34   Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 .....	1839
Bill 204   Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act .....	1839
Orders of the Day .....	1842
Government Motions	
Racism.....	1842
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 26   Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 2020.....	1845
Bill 28   Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020.....	1856

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