



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, July 13, 2020

Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, July 13, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

I ask, hon. members, that you'll please remaining standing with your hats off at this point in time. Actually, you know what? Please be seated. I just want to provide a couple of minutes or 30 seconds here while we get some additional folks into the Chamber. Then we're going to recognize an hon. member who has passed, and then we will do the portrait.

Please, come have a seat. [A member crossed in front of the dais] The hat was fun, but you could at least go around. Mercy, it's all come apart at the seams here.

Hon. members, please rise and remove your hats.

Mr. Robert Curtis Clark July 2, 1937, to July 10, 2020

The Speaker: Mr. Robert C. Clark was elected as the Social Credit Member for Didsbury in a by-election held on November 30, 1960. He was re-elected in the 1963 general election for Olds-Didsbury and served for that constituency until November 30, 1981.

Born in south-central Alberta, Mr. Clark was involved in the family farm operations and completed his teaching degree through the University of Alberta in Calgary in 1956, just four years before his election. During his 21 years as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta Mr. Clark was the minister of youth from 1966 to 1970, the Minister of Education from 1968 to 1971, and both the Leader of the Official Opposition and Official Opposition House Leader from 1973 to 1980. After serving in the Assembly, Mr. Clark continued his long life of public service. He was Alberta's first Information and Privacy Commissioner, from 1995 to 2001, and Alberta's first Ethics Commissioner, from 1992 to 2003. He chaired the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2002 and was a member of the board of governors for Olds College from 2010 to 2014 and the chair from 2014 to 2017.

The honours bestowed on Mr. Clark in recognition of contributions include the Lieutenant Governor's award for excellence in public administration in 2003 and the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. In 2013 the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta established an annual award named in his honour to recognize a significant contribution in advancing access to information in Alberta. Actively involved in sports throughout his life as a coach, general manager, and league organizer, he was inducted into the Alberta sports hall of fame in 1974 and the Alberta Hockey Hall of Fame in 2019. In his maiden speech Mr. Clark pledged his sincere co-operation and to work to the best of his ability for the betterment of the people of Alberta, and he did do just that.

Mr. Clark passed away last week at the age of 83. Not only was Mr. Clark an amazing Albertan, a gentleman, and a statesman; he was also a personal friend to the Speaker and a mentor of mine. I ask each of you to remember Mr. Clark as you may have known

him, in a moment of prayer or silent reflection. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *O Canada* by Nicole Williams. In observation of the COVID-19 public health guidelines outlined by Dr. Hinshaw, please refrain from singing aloud in the language of your choice.

Ms Williams:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

We're going to allow additional members to come to the Chamber that might like to be involved in the group photo, and then we'll take a picture momentarily.

Hon. members, briefly, before we take a picture today, I did receive a letter from Dana Peers, the president and chairman of the board of the Calgary Stampede. As all of you know, 2020 has presented some very unique challenges not only for our Assembly, our province, our country but right around the world. I'm very pleased to be able to recognize the Calgary Stampede for their enduring Stampede spirit in doing a number of wonderful Stampede activities, that many of you took part in, over the last number of weeks or at least the last 10 days. Today we share and join in the Stampede by celebrating that Stampede spirit, that even a global pandemic cannot quell.

Additionally, a number of you reached out to the office of the Speaker asking if we could celebrate together, with the wearing of hockey jerseys today, the fact that Edmonton and, in particular, Alberta was selected as a hub city for the 2020 NHL playoffs; thus, the great opportunity to celebrate these two monumental events together.

1:40

So here we are. I invite you to rise, look above the Speaker, and they will be happy to take a quick photo or two.

Hon. members, please be seated. Our photographer will remain in the Chamber taking pictures from above for the duration of question period. Hats and jerseys are welcome in the Chamber all the way up until the conclusion of the business this afternoon, which will be at 6 p.m.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are a number of guests joining us today in the galleries. In the gallery is a guest of the hon. Member for Grande Prairie: Isabelle Klassen. The Minister of Municipal Affairs also has guests this afternoon: from the Alberta New Home Warranty Program Alan Hallman, Lori Topp, and Scott Hamilton. And in the gallery is a guest of the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, a constituent of the Member for Calgary-Bow: Bettina Pierre-Gilles.

Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Calgary Stampede

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 days Albertans have shown that although Stampede traditions can indeed be

unceremoniously stuck in the chute, our community spirit just can't be bucked off. The Calgary Stampede family still engaged thousands of volunteers and partnered with businesses and social agencies to connect people virtually and at a distance in fun and community-focused examples of western hospitality and resilience.

From fireworks and pancake breakfasts to indigenous traditions and line dancing, not to mention perennial midway favourites, including a minidoughnut drive-through, the Stampede 2020 spirit shone brightly, punctuated last night by the most awe-inspiring fireworks.

Recognizing that the last four months have been challenging, Stampede volunteers also reached out in support of a number of important community groups, including the food bank, the Centre for Newcomers, the United Way, and Immigrant Services Calgary. After months of responsible distancing, such initiatives reconnect us and bring a much-needed morale boost to the community.

Right in my own constituency of Calgary-Fish Creek we have enjoyed the locally branded and newsworthy Calgary stompede, and while downtown streets were eerily silent, when I joined fellow cowpokes at the Sheraton Eau Claire on parade day, we enthusiastically flipped pancakes for hungry drive-through celebrants.

Many here in the Legislature and across Alberta are part of the Stampede spirit and know of the wide-ranging benefits, ironically and most markedly for those hit hard by the pandemic, that this great organization provides for Albertans not just in July but year-round.

So before we hang up our cowboy hats for another year, I would ask my colleagues to join me in not only donning but tipping their hats to the Calgary Stampede, the great volunteers, and wonderful community and corporate partners for coming together and making it possible for thousands to join them and showcase the community spirit that remains alive and well in Alberta. Together we will ride again in 2021 as we count down to yet another edition of the greatest outdoor show on Earth.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I enjoin all members of the House to raise their white Smithbills and, on the count of three, to let out a big Stampede cheer. One, two, three: yahoo.

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

Employment Insurance

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment is a terrible experience that causes anxiety and stress for any person experiencing it. However, thanks to employment insurance, workers have basic supports during these difficult times so that they can focus on their families and finding new work. Not only is employment insurance an important measure for families across this country; it has also been the most important economic stabilizer in the past three recessions.

Unions and workers fought hard for this social insurance, that has supported so many families over the last decades. During the Great Depression young unemployed men had to work in government work camps. It was brave workers in Vancouver that launched a strike for better work and wages. These workers were unrelenting in their pursuit of justice, and the now famous On to Ottawa Trek travelled across the country to present their case.

Politicians in Ottawa tried to end these strikes by arresting these brave workers and union leaders, but this protest inspired Canadians across the country to finally adopt employment insurance. For this reason, in 1940 Canada finally joined all other western countries in adopting this important social program.

Back in 1940 only 40 per cent of all workers were covered, and many workers such as seasonal workers had no chance to benefit.

Thanks to the continuous advocacy of unions, Canada finally got close to universal coverage in 1971, supporting thousands of workers through difficult periods of unemployment.

I would like to thank these brave workers and unions for fighting for unemployment insurance and never relenting in defending and advocating for improvements of this crucial social program.

Thank you.

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

NHL Hub City of Edmonton

Mr. Loewen: Hello out there. We're on the air. It's hockey night tonight. Well, maybe not tonight but coming soon to an arena near us.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans have been missing the opportunity to cheer on their favourite sports team. We have come to realize that watching the NHL playoffs in the spring is as Canadian as a double-double coffee.

Hockey isn't just entertainment. The NHL is an economic powerhouse. The announcement that Edmonton will be the NHL hub city is fantastic news for Alberta. From the many staff supporting each team to the people driving Zambonis, the return of the NHL playoffs is good news for employment. This decision is a testament to Alberta's world-leading response to the COVID-19 crisis. The hard work of public health officials and Albertans alike to limit the spread of the disease has made Edmonton a perfect destination for this adjusted playoff schedule. When play resumes, rules will continue to be in place to keep the players and the public safe. It's good to see that hockey sticks will be used for something other than a physical-distance measuring device.

Mr. Speaker, by having Edmonton become one of the two hub cities for the NHL playoffs, we will boost our economy by filling hotels and employing staff at rinks. Families of the players coming to stay and support their loved ones during this playoff season will be able to see the best our province has to offer, increasing the number of people enjoying Alberta's hard-hit tourism and hospitality sectors. The opportunity to host this year's playoffs will give our province a much-needed job-creating boost, that will give our province hope as we face this period of recovery.

Today I'm wearing the jersey of Bryon Baltimore, who played with the Oilers in the late '70s, showing that the only good orange is Oiler orange. Bryon is the father of our very own Brittany Baltimore. It's signed by Messier, McDavid, and Coffey.

This good news fits in very well with our economic recovery plan by showcasing Alberta's business-friendly environment. We attract investment and activity that grows our economy. It's all about building, diversifying, and creating jobs. NHL playoffs and Stanley Cup playoffs right here in Edmonton: you can't beat that.

Mr. Speaker, the puck is in. The home team wins the good old hockey game, but I hope that all of us can agree: go Oilers, go Flames, but mostly go Oilers. Alberta shoots; Alberta scores.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a statement to make.

Labour Unions

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, while this government is systematically attacking unions' ability to fight for their workers' rights, I just want to highlight some of the good work unions did to protect our essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While Albertans were still needing to access their local grocery stores, UFCW led the way to make sure that proper PPE and safety

procedures were put in place to protect their membership and their customers. Many store locations were fighting against providing needed safety items like Plexiglas screens. Because of UFCW fighting for these screens, they became commonplace in stores all across the province. Alberta and, once again, unions are leading the trend on worker safety.

UFCW and other unions negotiated hard to ensure that their members have sick days while this government stalls, delays, and makes excuses for not legislating mandatory sick days during COVID-19. It's a good thing union members had previously negotiated them into their contract. They do not need to weigh in the difficult options of staying home to stop the spread and having enough money to pay the rent.

Now with Bill 32 this government is removing legal requirements for prompt payment when someone is terminated. The reason for this change is to save large corporations \$100 million. So when what this government calls job creators lay off large numbers of their employees, they get to save millions by not paying those that are laid off within three to 10 days.

During the next few months of economic uncertainty with COVID-19 and this government's failed economic strategy there will be more rounds of layoffs to come. Thanks to unions some of these workers will still be able to receive their money within days, not weeks.

Will this Premier ever realize that unions are necessary to protect the rights of workers? I fear he never will because he's too busy catering to large corporations and his wealthy donors to actually stand up for hard-working Albertans.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Physician Retention

Ms Notley: Thank you. Wanted: doctors fleeing Alberta, come to Manitoba; same winter, better government. Mr. Speaker, it was only a matter of time. Quote, we're not surprised that nearly half are looking to relocate. Manitoba has competitive remuneration and benefits, and we're always happy to welcome physicians from other provinces. End quote. That's Doctors Manitoba making a play for our doctors. They've been taking calls for weeks from physicians looking for a way out. To the Premier. You've destroyed all trust in the relationship with doctors. Why are you pushing them into the arms of other provinces?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, physicians in Manitoba make 10 per cent less than they do in Alberta according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. They pay far more taxes as 1 percenters than they do in Alberta. Plus there's Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, let's be honest. Alberta has the highest per capita number of physicians in Canada, the best compensated physicians in Canada, the best compensated physicians in Alberta history. We support our physicians, but what we cannot continue to do is see 6 per cent annual increases in their compensation like under the NDP.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the PCs increased doctors' compensation by twice that amount every year when they were in power. We bent the curve without breaking the contract.

Nonetheless, doctors have reached a breaking point trying to deal with this Premier. According to a survey released by the AMA, 42 per cent are now considering looking for work in another province. That's nearly half of all the doctors in this province, a mass exodus

in the middle of a pandemic. How many Albertans have to lose their family doctors before this Premier stops this chaos and goes back to the table with doctors?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there is no mass exodus of physicians. There is mass political hysteria that the NDP is trying to employ to scare Albertans about their compensation. We support our physicians. They are a critical part of our health care system, so much so that we believe that they should be the best compensated physicians in Canada. You know, over the four years of the NDP physician compensation went up by 23 per cent, by a billion dollars, when nurses were held to zeroes. When the private-sector families saw their after-tax incomes go down by 10 per cent, the best compensated people in the public service saw a 23 per cent increase. It's not sustainable.

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the rate of increase under the PCs was twice that.

Let's be clear. It's not just about the doctors that are leaving. It's about the doctors who choose to stay. The survey shows that 37 per cent will cut their available hours, 41 per cent will reduce service in hospitals, 30 per cent will lay off staff. No matter how you cut it, this is a massive drop in care across the board. It will be devastating, and calling people hysterical because they worry about the future of their health care is disrespectful and not worthy of someone who wants to be Premier. Why won't you fix the mess you've created?

Mr. Kenney: Yeah, it sounds like the same name-calling we had in the last campaign, Mr. Speaker. We know how that worked out for the politics of anger and division coming from the NDP.

She's claiming that there's a mass exodus of physicians. Here's the data. There has been no recent change, as evidenced by Alberta Health billing numbers or notices of intent to close a practice filed with the College of Physicians & Surgeons. I have to ask. If it's about compensation, why would a doctor take a huge pay cut by moving to another province, only to pay more taxes and in most cases experience a higher cost of living? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

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

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is implying that 1,500 doctors filling out a survey are lying. That's exactly why they are leaving: an absolute loss of respect. Almost half of the doctors who've answered that survey said that they're looking to leave. His ideological pursuit of American-style health care is jeopardizing the health care that all Albertans are relying on in the middle of a pandemic. This is an emergency. Will the Premier agree to having a debate today to discuss the devastation he's causing to Alberta's health care? Yes or no?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we're having a debate right now. What I have noted is that yes, politics are happening from a professional association which represents the most highly compensated people in the public sector. They're almost all members of the 1 per cent club. They have seen a 23 per cent increase in their incomes, in their gross billings, over a period when the Alberta economy has shrunk by 18 per cent, from \$360 billion to \$300 billion. We're living through a fiscal and economic crisis, and we all have to be part of addressing it.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, doctors are, quote, paying the highest salaries and the highest rents and the highest amounts for equipment. They're small businesses. They could make more money in other provinces. End quote. That's the Health minister

from a time when he told the truth more frequently, admitting that doctors can make more elsewhere. The member has since deleted these posts, trying to erase facts he used to agree with. To the Premier: when the member said that doctors could make more elsewhere, was he lying?

The Speaker: I provided a significant amount of comments around the use of the word “lying” on Thursday. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will heed those comments.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the best compensated physicians in Canada according to the Canadian Institute of Health Information, according to the Ernst & Young performance review of AHS, according to Dr. MacKinnon’s panel, \$107,000 more in gross billings on average than the rest of the country. We have a lower cost of living than British Columbia and Ontario, and we have lower taxes for those same physicians. We believe they should be compensated fairly and, in fact, generously, but we cannot continue on a track that would have us spending \$2 billion more, 10 per cent of the total budget of the government of Alberta.

Ms Notley: Well, all that, except not according to his minister, who actually says that they don’t get paid as much as they would elsewhere. So somewhere there’s a disconnect, Mr. Speaker. We’ll figure it out.

You know what? Most experts agree that it isn’t about if; it’s about when the second wave of COVID-19 occurs. What this Premier should be doing is strengthening our public health system. Instead he’s trying to Americanize it while driving out doctors. When will the Premier take off his ideological blinders – remember; we’re in the middle, not the end but the middle, of a global pandemic – and call off his war on doctors?

Mr. Kenney: So she characterizes as a war the most generous compensation in the history of Alberta for physicians, Mr. Speaker, the highest per capita number of physicians in the country, the best compensated physicians in the country, who enjoy the lowest personal income taxes in the country and a substantially lower cost of living. I guess the NDP is now on record. They support the AMA, that wants a deal that would see a further \$2 billion increase in compensation in the midst of an economic meltdown for the rest of the province. It’s not fair. It’s not right. We need balance when it comes to physician compensation.

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

Ms Notley: We’re on record as saying that when 42 per cent of doctors say that they’re thinking about leaving, that’s an emergency, and someone should pay attention.

Keystone XL Pipeline Provincial Equity

Ms Notley: Now a different topic. We all know that Keystone XL is an important project for Alberta. We need more takeaway capacity, and we need it in every direction. That being said, the Premier signed a \$7 billion deal to backstop this project while keeping Albertans in the dark. Last week the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it would not let construction on KXL start south of border even while things get going here. Will the Premier now commit to providing Albertans with the actual details of how much and how their \$7 billion is at risk? Simple question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, (a) we’ve done that; (b) it’s not a \$7 billion investment; it’s a \$1.5 billion investment followed by a loan

guarantee to support construction next year; (c) as I pointed out last week, the U.S. Supreme Court did not halt construction. I don’t know why she continues to try to mislead this House and Albertans. We made it absolutely clear. Construction continues. We can show her a video of the construction happening south of the border. You know, it’s a figment of the NDP’s imagination that construction is halted. It continues. The NDP always opposed Keystone XL. We’re doing everything we can to get it built.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, in TC’s own submissions they said that it would cease construction if they lost the case. So, silly me, listening to stuff they filed in court.

You know, James Coleman, a professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and an expert in pipeline law, called the Premier’s deal a gamble. Quote: I would put the chances of it getting constructed at 45 per cent and the chances of recovering anything if it’s not built at less than 50 per cent. Premier, is this what your risk analysis shows? Did you really put \$7 billion down on a 50-50 bet?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: No, we did not put \$7 billion down, Mr. Speaker. The \$6 billion loan guarantee only comes into effect to support construction following the swearing-in of the next American President. Does she stand up purposefully to seek to mislead people by stating things like that when she knows it’s patently false? Of course there’s risk. We had to derisk this because the private sector was not prepared to get this thing done, much like the federal government did with TMX. The NDP always opposed it. We’ve got shovels in the ground, and we’re building it.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, according to TC’s own submissions and many people writing about what’s going on down there, it’s not actually getting built right now. It’s delayed for at least a year. At least a year. Now, the Premier tried to say that construction is going on, but everyone else is saying that it’s delayed for at least a year. The risk of failure is greater than 50 per cent, and he himself tells us that we’ve already spent \$7 billion every time he talks about his \$14 billion recovery plan, so pick a lane, Premier. Either way, we deserve details on this deal. Why is he hiding them?

Mr. Kenney: Nothing is being hidden: a \$1.5 billion preferred equity stake this year, construction under way in multiple jurisdictions south of the border and in Saskatchewan and Alberta, pump stations being constructed right now. The Supreme Court effectively upheld a lower court decision that requires individual permits to be made for water crossings, Mr. Speaker. It’s unbelievable – well, actually, it is entirely believable – that the antipipeline NDP would be so profoundly wrong. She and her buddies at the Alberta Federation of Labour and Unifor always opposed Keystone XL. They opposed Northern Gateway. They’ve opposed pipelines. We’re getting them built.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising with a question.

Physician Retention (continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly half of Alberta’s doctors are considering leaving thanks to hostility from the UCP: that’s not me talking. Rather, it’s the headline of a column published Friday in the *Calgary Herald* by a long-time backer of this Premier, Licia Corbella. She notes that “if even a fraction of those physicians carry through, it will be a costly brain drain that

will be felt by Albertans for generations to come.” To the Premier: are you driving away experienced doctors because you know full well that they will not stand for your profit-centred Americanization of our public health care system?

Mr. Shandro: There’s so much to unpack there, Mr. Speaker. Americanization: first of all, we’re Albertanizing our system. Those 42 clinics the NDP financed themselves when they were in government: we are helping those facilities through Bill 30. But if he’s going to speak about the article and the survey that – look, this is a pressure tactic of the AMA. That’s not at all what the evidence shows us. We’re going to follow the evidence. We’re speaking with physicians and with the AMA. This is a pressure tactic of theirs. Look, we encourage the AMA to work with us, and we look forward to them doing so.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pressure tactics are what this minister has been using – every lever, every piece of power at his disposal – to attack and grind down doctors for months. This deeply concerning survey from the Alberta Medical Association, referenced by our leader earlier, found that one-third of physicians say that they may leave the profession or retire entirely. These are some of our most experienced, most trusted physicians, who have built strong rural practices and training centres. They predated this Premier and this much-maligned Minister of Health. We know that Manitoba doctors have rolled out the welcome mat for their colleagues here. To the Premier: do you really want your legacy to be destroying public health care by driving our most experienced physicians two provinces away?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to refer to a survey which 10 per cent of physicians filled out, let him go and do so. If he wants to call it an attack, let him do so, but the attack is the \$5.4 billion that we’re going to spend on physicians, the highest level in the history of this province, the highest on a per capita level in this country. Let’s also note the announcement that we came out with on April 24 with my rural caucus colleagues: \$81 million going to our 700 rural physicians so that we can expand access in rural Alberta for our physicians.

Mr. Shepherd: Rural physicians aren’t buying it, Mr. Speaker, because the numbers on that survey are far more accurate than the cherry-picked statistics and numbers used by this minister. Alberta Medical Association President Christine Molnar said last week, quote: physicians have reached a breaking point. She added, quote: I’m deeply troubled by where this is going and what it’s going to mean for medical practices and patients in the coming months. To the Premier. Being a physician is stressful enough. Being a patient in a hospital is stressful enough. Do we really need you pushing physicians and patients to the breaking point in the middle of a global pandemic?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I point out that the hon. member is welcome to refer to surveys that 10 per cent of physicians filled out. Well, look, we see this as a pressure tactic. We’re going to continue to work with the AMA. We look forward to them providing us with a counterproposal that actually does meet our requirement of staying within \$5.4 billion in physician compensation, the highest level in the history of this province and the highest on a per capita basis of anywhere else in this country because we believe that our physicians should be properly

compensated. That’s why we provided them with this physician compensation budget.

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

Bill 32

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our government introduced Bill 32, which introduced a wide variety of changes aimed at addressing some major issues within Alberta’s labour laws. These changes address a large number of our platform commitments and will go a long way in addressing imbalances in labour relationships in our province, including between some union members and their leadership. To the Minister of Labour and Immigration: what changes is our government bringing in on how unions collect dues for the purposes of political activism?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government was elected to restore balance and support employee choice, and that’s exactly what we’re doing with Bill 32. We are protecting workers from being forced to fund political activities and causes without their explicit opt-in approval. According to research results from Second Street polling 70 per cent of Canadians do not think that union dues should be used for political activities and nonwork initiatives, and 72 per cent of unionized and former unionized workers oppose these expenditures by their union. We were elected on a promise to deliver this, and we will do so.

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

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given that the scope of changes being introduced by Bill 32 is wide ranging and given that members opposite have tried to make claims that Bill 32 will bring in massive changes to what work youth are able to do and given that they have gone so far as to claim that these changes will put our young individuals at risk, to the minister: how will this bill open up jobs for youth, and will it still protect these teens from dangerous or harmful jobs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and Immigration has the call.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for the question. It is disappointing but, frankly, not surprising that the members opposite are once again using tactics of fear and smear to scare Albertans on this subject. I want to correctly state what has been misrepresented: 13- and 14-year-olds will only be allowed to work specific jobs from a preapproved list. This list is comprised of jobs that permits were granted for under the previous New Democrat government and includes jobs such as tutoring, working at a dance studio, coaching, retail clerk, and certain jobs in the hospitality sector.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the historical purpose of picketing was to peacefully persuade someone from doing business with said employer and given that Bill 32 also updates Alberta’s rules on secondary picketing, in which union members block off buildings unrelated to the employer they are in conflict with, and given that Alberta has seen secondary pickets such as those around Co-op Gas facilities over the last year, to the minister: do these proposed rules in Bill 32 obstruct the right to

picket around businesses or prevent the individual worker's freedom?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not at all. Our government supports workers' rights to strike and picket, and these changes ensure that employees will still be able to strike and picket but with the additional rules to make sure that these activities do not overly impact the rights of individuals and businesses. Before 2017 secondary picketing or picketing somewhere other than the employer's business was not in the code. All we are doing is requiring that there must be advance approval prior to secondary picketing. This is not dissimilar to the legislation in B.C. Similarly, changes would allow the Labour Relations Board to prohibit picketing when it obstructs or impedes a person from crossing the picket line, again similar to the approach in B.C.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Pension Fund Investment Management by AIMCo

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee heard from the executives of AIMCo. As many Albertans have already heard, there were serious and sizable losses to the heritage trust fund recently as well as to other AIMCo clients, including public-sector pensions. I'm talking about losses that came as part of a derivative space trading scheme that AIMCo executives had allowed to grow riskier over time. Does the Finance minister think that after AIMCo vaporized \$400 million from the heritage savings trust fund over the last few months, AIMCo should still be forced as the investment manager on pensions? If so, why do you believe that?

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

2:10

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The heritage savings trust fund had a difficult quarter, but that's not surprising given the coronavirus economic challenge that investment funds experienced around the world. In fact, Japan's government pension fund lost \$164 billion, or 11 per cent, during that same time frame. WorkSafeBC's investment surplus of \$3 billion is reported to be wiped out. I continue to have confidence in AIMCo to deliver.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister himself is directly responsible for AIMCo's performance and given that we are talking about a very specific trading strategy and given that in AIMCo's own summary of this debacle they have written – and I quote – that risk governance controls, collaboration, and risk culture, while evolving and improving over the last two to three years, are still unsatisfactory, end quote, and given that this minister and this government through Bill 22 forcibly moved Alberta teacher pensions, funds that are not the property of the government, to now use AIMCo and their still unsatisfactory culture, will you finally admit that Bill 22 was a mistake?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, AIMCo has done a deep dive. They've actually utilized a third party to do a review of their practices, and they've started taking corrective action based on the recommendations from this review panel. Again, I appreciate the speed at which AIMCo has moved to identify the problem, to seek solutions, and to take corrective action. I want to just remind the member opposite that the VOLTS strategy was in place when the

members opposite were in government. We will work to ensure that AIMCo's strategy reflects the value of the asset going forward.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, given that that answer, like the risk culture at AIMCo, is unsatisfactory and given that the Premier continues to muse about one day holding a referendum to remove Albertans from the CPP, an idea that the majority of Albertans consistently reject, and given that the government continues to pile all of its major financial assets into AIMCo's basket and given that the risk culture is still, and I quote, unsatisfactory – and that's after three years of improvement – to the Premier: why would you want to remove Albertans from the safety of CPP and gamble their retirement security with an agency who, by their own recognition, has yet to establish satisfactory risk culture?

Mr. Toews: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I'm confident that with the adjustments that are being made at AIMCo right now, AIMCo will continue to deliver great results for Albertans into the future. But what I cannot understand is the members opposite's aversion to looking into every possible opportunity to provide value for Albertans. That's what we're doing when we're doing a deep dive in considering whether an Alberta pension plan approach would be good for Albertans. We think it's worthy of a review. If there's merit, we will put the question in front of Albertans. I cannot understand the NDP.

Environmental Monitoring Notifications

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the UCP has failed at every opportunity to answer the simple question about who, if anyone, they notified about the decision to suspend environmental monitoring. It's clear that Alberta's First Nations weren't consulted despite the impact this decision has on treaties, and Alberta has also failed to notify partners in the Northwest Territories despite our legal obligations to do so. Will the minister of environment tell this House why the government broke the law and failed to tell the government of the Northwest Territories that they were suspending monitoring of our air, land, and water?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the government did not break the law. That's categorically false. Again, the NDP continues to mislead Albertans. It's disappointing. Here is what is happening. At its core the NDP only cares about protecting workers if they don't work in the oil and gas industry. Alberta's government took steps to help protect workers and help employers protect workers during COVID-19. At the same time it's protecting the environment. We were able to find that balance as we worked through this process together, and we will continue to do that going forward because we will protect all Albertans.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the media coverage is very clear that the government failed to fulfill their agreements in law – therefore, the government broke the law – and given that the NWT deputy minister of environment wrote the government of Alberta, quote, we have been made aware that the AER has indefinitely suspended several environmental monitoring requirements, end quote, and given that her e-mail was ignored until she wrote again 10 days later, why is this minister so fixated on ruining the environment and our relationship with our partners in Confederation at the same time?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, all of that is false. Yet again and again another example of the NDP continuing to mislead Albertans and this Chamber. The reality is that the deputy minister of environment immediately contacted her counterpart inside the

Northwest Territories government upon receipt of that letter. Further to that, I had a conversation with the environment minister inside the Northwest Territories. At the end of the day, this is just the NDP's attempt yet again to not be able to stand with the energy industry. They care about protecting employees across this province when it comes to COVID-19 except for those inside the energy industry. Shame on them.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister's timeline doesn't reflect the reality of what was published in the paper over the weekend and on the CBC and given that the deputy minister of environment said that the NWT stated that the decision was concerning to many residents of the NWT, especially because of potential impacts to upstream water quality in the Territories, and given that the minister didn't consult with Albertans – he didn't consult with the people of the Northwest Territories; it's no wonder we're all left to worry about the impacts to our drinking water, air, and land – will the minister commit here and now to a full public report on the damage that was caused by this halt to reporting, and if not, what is he hiding?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yeah, Mr. Speaker, the newspaper has never been wrong before. The hon. member should probably work a little bit harder on preparing her questions. Here's the reality. It was very, very clear in all the orders associated with this issue to protect employees that everything to do with drinking water had to remain in place and did remain in place. That is yet just another example of the NDP fearmongering and making things up right on the spot. It's disappointing; it causes fear within our system. I can assure Albertans that our environmental monitoring has remained in place. We have protected the environment, but, yes, we took steps to be able to protect energy workers in the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Keystone XL Pipeline Project

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my riding of Drumheller-Stettler we've witnessed the start of construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. It's very exciting and timely, if you can call it timely, even though the pipe has sat there for 10 years. I've already witnessed the direct and indirect economic benefits begin for the communities in my constituency, and I'm confident it will continue because of this project and the jobs it will create. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: how will the Keystone XL pipeline contribute to the many sectors involved in Alberta's economic recovery?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Keystone XL project is vital to both Alberta's immediate economic recovery and our long-term economic stability as a province. Throughout construction it means that companies not just in the oil and gas sector but in the accommodation, food services, manufacturing, and transportation sectors will benefit from the need to support the workers as they build this vital project. The leader of the NDP sat in Justin Trudeau's office while he vetoed Northern Gateway, but we are getting pipelines built.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the oil and gas sector is one of Alberta's key industries and will play an important role in recovering from COVID-19 and given that the federal

Liberals have done everything in their power to restrict our natural resource industries, including the no-more-pipelines bill and the antitanker bill, to the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: what are our government's future plans for the oil and gas sector to ensure economic recovery as the Liberals and some organizations try to shut down our energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP union boss as well as failed NDP candidate has spent a significant amount of union resources fighting against pipelines. On this side of the House we appreciate that pipelines like Keystone XL translate into significant revenues for the province in addition to a significant number of good-paying union jobs on both sides of the border. That's why governors and state legislators along the pipeline route all support Keystone XL.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Keystone XL pipeline will see over 2,000 construction workers hired for the project in Alberta and is projected to generate \$30 billion in tax and royalty revenue and given that Joe Biden says that he will veto the pipeline if he is elected in the November U.S. election, to the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: what will our government do to ensure that the Keystone XL pipeline will be finished being built even if the antipipeline Joe Biden is elected come the fall?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of speculating on the outcome of a U.S. election that is still several months away, our government is taking meaningful action to ensure that Keystone XL is getting built right now, in fact, as we speak. Now, while the NDP and Gil McGowan are having their little temper tantrums on Twitter, we're doing meaningful things. The Minister of Energy is reaching out to U.S. state officials, governors, and their teams and ensuring that they understand the benefits to their local economy of building Keystone XL.

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

2:20 COVID-19 Outbreak at Cargill Canada

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 outbreak at the Cargill meat-packing plant was the largest in North America. This government stood behind Cargill's ownership during their mishandling of worker safety protocols and insisted that the plant remained safe when that clearly was not the case. Workers lost their lives. Now Cargill is facing a lawsuit alleging that Cargill should have known that the lack of protective measures would affect both the workers and people they were close to as well. After all this time will the minister of agriculture apologize to the workers of Cargill for telling them that the plant was safe? Will he finally take some responsibility for this terrible mishandling?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is focused on the health and safety of Albertans through COVID-19 and the pandemic. It was tragic what happened to certain employees who

passed away at these sites. Workers were impacted across the world as this pandemic impacted work sites in Canada, in Alberta, and throughout all the nations. As soon as we received word that there was an issue at the work site, we had our officials on the ground, occupational health and safety and AHS, to ensure that the measures were in place to protect workers.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it was tragic. It was a tragedy that could have been avoided with quicker action on your part.

Given that both this government and the management at Cargill owe Albertans an explanation and a commitment to take whatever action is necessary to prevent a similar tragedy in the future and given that my colleagues on the Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee requested that the Premier, the Minister of Health, and the Cargill chairman and CEO, Dave MacLennan, appear before the committee to take questions on behalf of the people of Alberta, to the minister. Perhaps you should also go before the committee. Will you? If not, what are you hiding?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I think it's embarrassing and shameful for the NDP to continue to try to use the select special committee, which, by name, is to review the Public Health Act. They are using this as an opportunity. Instead of reviewing the Public Health Act, as this Legislature has directed them and as Albertans have asked them, they are using this as an opportunity to continue to politicize COVID. It's unfortunate, shameful. It's embarrassing for this Legislature. Get to work, NDP, and review the Public Health Act.

The Speaker: The hon. member, without a preamble.

Mr. Dach: Thank you. Embarrassing and shameful all right, their actions. That is what it was.

Now, given that the Premier and his ministers will do anything and everything to protect their wealthy friends and insiders and given that it isn't enough to dole out \$4.7 billion in corporate handouts to big companies but now they have to cover up what happened at Cargill as it is a big mishandling and big misjudgment on their part, the worst COVID outbreak in North America, and given that while this government has called front-line workers heroes but have shown them little support even after some of them have lost their lives, to the minister: once and for all, after all this time, will you commit to a public inquiry of Cargill's mishandling of this . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We actually have begun a process to begin the review of our response to the pandemic so that we can take the pandemic plan, that was last updated in 2014, and we can use what we learned throughout the response to this pandemic to update that plan. Going forward, we have begun the process of engaging someone to do that review. That's the proper forum for this to happen, as has happened in past responses to pandemics. Unfortunately, the NDP continue to try and politicize COVID and try and politicize the committee that they were instructed by this Legislature to go to, an all-party committee to review the Public Health Act. Let's get to work.

Economic Recovery and Women

Member Irwin: Women have been hit the hardest by job losses during the pandemic. No, it's not just me saying this. Many

economists are pointing this out, and the data is clear. Yet when asked about his plan to create jobs for women, instead of telling us how he would address an issue affecting half of our province, the Premier responded by saying that there are no gender-based economies. Premier, surely, women have told you about the barriers they face in economic participation, from child care to the wage gap. Why aren't you listening?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I'd like to thank the Minister of Children's Services for her immediate response in COVID of \$17.8 million to make sure that our child care workers could get back and to make sure that our front-line workers were protected and that they had places to have their kids while they were protecting the rest of us during COVID.

I'd also like to suggest that we had also offered a \$2 top-up to health care workers – that was actually stopped by the union organizations – in order to make sure that women in particular had that top-up. These are just two things. I hope to get more questions.

Thank you.

Member Irwin: This government thinks that wealth will trickle down from men to women. Women in Alberta had the highest labour force participation rate gap in the country before the pandemic, which has only worsened the situation. To the minister of labour: why aren't you focusing on creating well-paying, full-time jobs for women?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The focus of our government is to get Albertans back to work. We rolled out an economic recovery plan which seeks to attract investment into our economy to get the private sector to create jobs for women and all Albertans. We're also funding the greatest amount of infrastructure build this province has seen historically. This is all about getting Albertans back to work, getting women back to work. Even with Bill 32, it's about attracting investment and getting Albertans back to work. This is part of our plan, and we're excited to announce more in the coming days.

Member Irwin: Access to higher education is crucial to helping women enter and progress in the workforce, but investments will be required in all types of higher education such as STEM, which we know that young women already face immense barriers to entering. Can the Minister of Advanced Education explain why he isn't making higher education more accessible and more affordable for young women in Alberta? We know that you've invested in Women Building Futures, but what else are you doing?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the member opposite knows that we've invested over \$10 million in Women Building Futures, and I'm wondering why, then, we have to ask the question. Nonetheless, you know, it's an incredible organization that helps more women find employment opportunities in the skilled trades. It's a fantastic organization. We've made that commitment because it's important to find more opportunities for women not just as a result of the economic recovery but just more broadly. We need to see more women in apprenticeship learning and in the skilled trades. I'm working very closely with my other colleagues to look at future initiatives along the way as well.

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

Physician Compensation Disclosure

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MacKinnon report found that Alberta physicians are paid significantly higher than comparable provinces like Ontario, B.C., and Quebec. Alberta spends nearly 25 per cent more per capita on physician services than comparable provinces. In fact, a doctor in Alberta earns roughly \$90,000 more than a doctor in Ontario. However, the Alberta Medical Association insists that physicians in Alberta aren't paid higher than other provinces. To the Minister of Health: please explain to this House how our government is exploring introducing physician compensation transparency similar to other public servants in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. In tough economic times it's even more important that Albertans know where their tax dollars are being spent. We're spending \$5.4 billion on physicians here in this province. Physicians in Alberta are well paid, and we believe that they should remain well paid, but we also believe in accountability, and we also believe in transparency. So today I directed my department to immediately begin consultations with the Alberta Medical Association on a sunshine list.

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

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that physician fees have almost tripled since 2002 and that without any changes the current model would have cost taxpayers an additional \$2 billion by 2022-2023 and given that our government believes in transparency and that Albertans should know the facts about physician compensation, can the Minister of Health explain how many other provinces disclose physician salaries to the public?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you. Currently B.C., Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick publicly disclose physician compensation. Newfoundland also just announced that they're going to look at a similar list for medical practitioners. These provinces simply publish gross payment, though, without any other additional measures for context. Our list will be the most comprehensive in Canada and will disclose the name of the practitioner, the specialty, gross payments, number of days worked, unique patient visits, and total patient visits, and this will be, far and above, the most transparent and comprehensive of any other sunshine lists in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2015 the previous government introduced legislation to publicly disclose the salaries of thousands of public-sector workers, including doctors. Given that the legislation was tabled by the former Justice minister, who said that the NDP government is committed to helping ensure Albertans know how public money is spent, and given that that same NDP minister said that their legislation is aimed to get at, essentially, high-income earners who are on the public dime, to the Minister of Health: why is it important to do what the NDP never did and improve transparency in our public sector?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Providing Albertans with publicly disclosed compensation information will help to improve the dialogue and show the AMA how serious we are about improving transparency and improving accountability. Compensation disclosure will be based on existing policies for public servants, which will allow an individual to apply for an exemption if he or she feels that their safety could be compromised. I look forward to working with the AMA and discussing this matter during consultations, and we will once again do what the NDP failed to do in their four years.

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

Postsecondary Student Aid Grants and Tuition

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be setting them up for failure rather than setting them up for success down the road: that was the response from Lethbridge resident Sarah Christensen when asked about the impact of the government's cuts to the maintenance grant which allowed postsecondary students, mostly women with children or other dependants, to receive financial assistance. To the minister: what do you have to say to Alberta parents like Sarah for whom you have just added numerous barriers for them to attend postsecondary?

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

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter remains that our government is providing almost \$55 million in student grants so that all individuals can access postsecondary education. Again let's look at the NDP record over their tenure as government: despite increased funding to postsecondary institutions, no increase in postsecondary participation. So you'll forgive me if I don't take lectures from those members when it comes to increasing postsecondary participation rates. We'll get the job done in a thorough manner.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that many working Albertans are going to be returning to postsecondary to retrain or upgrade their skills for new work and given that this grant would have kept them from taking on debt in the form of student loans and would have opened doors for people to be able to go to postsecondary education and given that it's my job to lecture this individual and I'm sure that he should listen to good advice, can the minister explain how working Albertans are expected to manage the rising costs of raising a family and record-high tuition levels imposed by this government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We're doing that by providing record levels of financial assistance in terms of student grants and student aid more broadly. You'll remember that last year we also introduced a new scholarship to allow more individuals to access postsecondary opportunities. It's also important to know that with the changes that our government has made to the low-income grant, an additional 6,400 Albertans will be able to access the low-income grant and access postsecondary participation. Again you'll excuse me if I don't take advice from the members opposite. We have a different approach.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the primary responsibility of the Minister of Advanced Education is to advocate on behalf of all postsecondary students and given that under your watch, Minister, the education at Alberta's colleges, trade schools, universities is becoming way more out of reach for regular

Albertans, at what point in this government's mandate are you going to start to do your job and stand up for Alberta's students?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm doing precisely that in advocating for all postsecondary students, which is one of the reasons why we made the change to the low-income grant, because under the former rules of the low-income grant individuals who were in the low-income category and wanted to pursue either graduate studies or apprenticeship education or other educational opportunities could not access the grant. In these difficult economic times we know it's imperative that we give all Albertans access to postsecondary education, which is why we've made that change. Again, as a result of that change, 6,400 more low-income Albertans will be able to access the grant.

Arts, Culture, and Community Organization Funding

Ms Goehring: Since this government's election the Alberta arts and culture sector has been under attack. It started with the \$3 million in cuts to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts' budget, and it's only gotten worse from there. This UCP government's stance when it comes to our culture and arts sector, that has contributed \$5.3 billion to the economy here in Alberta, is obvious. We are in the thick of a pandemic and economic crisis, and the culture and arts sector has yet to be actively included in the economic recovery. To the minister: what are you going to do to address the mass distrust that your government actually cares about our arts sector? Will you provide real help to them ever?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I always find these questions very interesting from this member. We're actually having round-tables as we speak, right now. It's been very, very important to talk with the sector about what it is that they need and how best to support them. I have a few things that I'm able to share. One of the things is that that particular member was actively putting fear into the sector by saying that we weren't funding when, actually, we had transformed it into operational dollars to help that sector keep their heads above water. She may have forgotten, but we were in the middle of COVID.

Ms Goehring: Given that this government paused the community initiatives program with no notice, cutting off support for countless community groups and cultural associations, and given that many of these groups were forced to put community enhancement projects on hold at a time when it could be argued that we need such things more than ever as people have been forced to stay close to home due to COVID-19, to the minister: is it that you don't care about community groups, or do you not recognize that healthy and happy communities are key to our economic recovery?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I'm glad, really, super happy, actually, that the member got the language right. She's right. We did pause. Of course, initially she was saying that we had actually ended funding, so thank you for that clarification. It's nice to hear the actual language come forward. Actually, on many, many different levels, like I said, with all different parts of the sector we had many round-tables. Actually, that member was invited to discussions during COVID in order to have these. If she has specific, particular groups that she's interested in helping, my door is open at all times. I'd love to receive an e-mail. In response to in respect of how we worked with the sector, we've been listening. We're acting on that, looking forward to getting to work.

Ms Goehring: Given that our opposition NDP has proposed specific action such as restarting CIP grants and restoring at least the \$3 million into the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and given that we came up with these recommendations after conducting consultations with the arts community and given that none of our proposals are included in the government's so-called economic relaunch strategy, to the minister: do our artists, our arts community, and our community groups really not deserve a dime in your plan? Do you really not care about them that much?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I'm so sorry to correct the member again. I didn't realize that the investment of \$26.9 million was mere pennies. I realize that the NDP had some sort of money tree. I have yet to find it at this point. I know that they may not realize this, but the rest of Albertans actually understand that we're in a fiscal crisis right now and that we are allocating dollars to the best of our ability and leveraging those. Actually, the sector has been absolutely stellar in helping us understand the best way to use those dollars. I'm very proud of the AFA and their ability to leverage dollars in the community. I'm looking very forward to our upcoming projects.

Economic Recovery

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity to recover from the triple crises of low oil prices, COVID-19, and the corresponding recession. While we need the energy sector and oil and gas in particular to emerge from this fragile time into a strong and prosperous future, we also need other industries to grow as well. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: how will the government create the environment for all industries and businesses to thrive here in Alberta?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our economic recovery plan has a number of different measures that will provide relief to the economy as a whole such as the acceleration of the job-creation tax cut but also wide-ranging measures that will span multiple industries such as our record infrastructure spend and our efforts to cut regulation. We are also implementing a number of sector strategies that will target industries that have long-term growth potential across Alberta, and our Invest Alberta corporation will work aggressively to attract high-value, high-impact investment from across the world.

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of creating an environment for all sectors of the economy to grow and given that the global economic climate requires us to also have a plan for specific sectors, especially for tourism, which is an important industry for my constituents and our neighbours in Banff-Kananaskis, while the tourism industry along with all industries will benefit from the accelerated job-creation tax cut along with other measures, to the same minister: what is the government doing to specifically support the tourism industry to help us recover from these crises?

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

2:40

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has implemented tens of millions of dollars and measures to support the tourism industry. We abated the

tourism levy until December 31, which provides potentially as much as \$27 million in relief to tourism operators, responding to their number one ask of more money in their pockets. Travel Alberta has also provided \$17 million in relief to local tourism marketing organizations, businesses, municipalities, and non-profits, and we will be repositioning our 10-year tourism strategy to be implemented in three phases: response, recovery, and rebuild.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's goal is to create jobs and grow the entire economy and given that sector-specific strategies are vital to that and given the potential of the technology sector to create benefits in every other sector, to the same minister: how will this government grow the technology sector to realize all of the potential benefits?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and once again thank you to the member. Our government announced a suite of measures to support the technology sector. We will be introducing the innovation employment grant, which will make Alberta the most competitive place to invest in technology; we're recapitalizing the Alberta Enterprise Corporation with \$175 million, which will provide much-needed venture capital to start-ups, and my colleague the Minister of Labour and Immigration is also introducing several measures that will be focused on top foreign graduates of U.S. universities, inviting them to bring their companies and their ideas to our province to create jobs here.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements. If you are leaving the Chamber, I encourage you to do so in an expeditious fashion.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Economic Recovery and Northern Development

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that we're facing considerable financial challenges due to the global pandemic and the collapse in world oil prices. Now more than ever there's a need to develop and implement strategy for economic recovery to lead Alberta out of these challenges and into renewed prosperity. In this unprecedented time the layers of challenge to the world economy have come together in a perfect storm, resulting in global government spending in greater measure than I have seen in my lifetime. Considering that our spending decisions will impact future generations, I believe we have a responsibility to spend wisely, investing in critical infrastructure to establish a strong economic foundation and build capacity for those generations just as previous generations did for us. Here in Alberta we must be stewards of our resources to stimulate recovery now and establish a strong foundation for our long-term economic health.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that the north and northern development will play a key role in our economic recovery, both now and in the long term. My constituency of Grande Prairie is already an economic bright spot in Alberta, and I want to build on that momentum right across the north. In response to the Fair Deal Panel report our government released an outline of the work and direction under way to support the north through the Northern Alberta Development Council, or NADC. The NADC, of which I

am the chair, is a provincial government agency that investigates northern Alberta's economic and social development priorities, programs, and services. To encourage investment and job creation in the north, the NADC is focusing on the development of one or more multimodal corridors across the north, which would include broadband, utilities, roadways, and rail. In addition to this work, we will be undertaking some exciting work this fall to develop a northern strategy, identifying the priority actions and supports needed to ensure the north is well positioned to support Alberta's economic recovery and build a prosperous future for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, as I look to the future and envision brighter days ahead, I see the development of the north as a key pillar in our economic plan. Thank you.

Calgary Stampede

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives in many ways. One of the things that everybody has been missing are festivals and events that normally occur at this time. In a lot of ways it doesn't quite feel like summer. Perhaps for many of us one of the biggest missing experiences is this year's Calgary Stampede. For the first time in over a century the greatest outdoor show on Earth did not go on. Many of us remember with pride the fact that the Stampede went ahead in 2013 despite extensive flooding and the somewhat unparliamentary though quite delightful come "... or High Water" shirts. Championship Sunday was a bit different this year. There was no parade, no two-stepping in the Nashville north tent, and no kids screaming for one more midway ride.

Still, Calgary celebrated Stampede this year, Mr. Speaker. There were gatherings among friends. There were drive-through pancake breakfasts. Some businesses took it upon themselves to dress up their establishment in Western themes as they always do, and volunteers stepped forward this time to help out with the pandemic. Those famous fireworks went off last night. I can report that minidoughnuts taste almost as good from the comfort of home as they do riding back on the C-Train.

What is clear to me after the last 10 days is that while this year has proven hard and has proven to be unlike any other in history, COVID-19 wasn't enough to quash my city's Stampede spirit. I'm happy to look forward to Stampede and all the community breakfasts being back next year. I know I grew up eating pancakes at the local mall and enjoying the excitement of heading down to the grounds. My fellow caucus members and I look forward to getting together with Albertans and visitors from around the world to celebrate the 2021 Stampede.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, yahoo.

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

COVID-19 Response and Economic Recovery

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing unprecedented times with the triple threat of a global economic meltdown, a crash in energy prices, and a world-wide pandemic, the extent and duration of which has yet to be seen. But I have hope, well, not just hope but great confidence in my fellow Albertans. I always knew deep down that the people of this province had incredible resolve, and that resolve shone through in how we responded to COVID-19.

Albertans did everything they could to prevent the spread of this virus, Mr. Speaker, and as new information came to light and as recommendations were adjusted, people adapted almost instantly to the changing conditions. Albertans banded together, took care of each other, found new and creative ways not only to help their

communities but Alberta as a whole. When our province began to slowly and carefully open things up again, people were still mindful of keeping themselves and those around them safe. Alberta can boast that we had the least restrictive pandemic response while at the same time the lowest rates per capita of infections, hospitalizations, and mortality in the country. All this is due to that famous get 'er done Alberta spirit. No matter what we face, we have a culture of rolling up our sleeves and never quitting until the job is done.

That's why I'm confident, Mr. Speaker, that this province can tackle the economic reality that we are facing. Alberta is taking bold action with our ambitious recovery plan to create jobs and opportunity throughout our province. Strategic investment and infrastructure projects will ensure that the industries that fuel our economy and the services that Albertans rely upon are well positioned for growth for decades to come. Our government is investing in all industries and sectors so that entrepreneurs have the research and the supports that they need to grow and thrive. Accelerating the job-creation tax cut will attract investment and give us a competitive edge locally and abroad. This is the role of government, to create the conditions under which creative, hard-working, and highly motivated people can roll up their sleeves and get to work. I have full confidence that Albertans will take advantage of the opportunities before them and with that get 'er done attitude will be able to create many more opportunities of their own.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Racist Incidents in Edmonton

Mr. Dang: Even though the symbols were backwards and the words weren't spelled correctly, there's intention behind what they did, and I think that needs to be addressed by everyone. This is what a constituent said to me after they found swastikas and racial slurs defacing their vehicle and dozens of their neighbours' cars and property. Last Wednesday night racists were emboldened to attack a neighbourhood in my constituency by smashing windows, slashing tires, and vandalizing property with racist messaging. While these attacks appeared to be random and many have chalked this up to kids being kids, Albertans can no longer ignore the racist hate that is represented in what they painted because these symbols cause real damage.

Quote: my truck is just a truck, and the paint was able to be washed off, but I had to drive to work with that hate still on my car, and I had to drive by a young black family and others that were impacted by what was sprayed on my truck; they do not deserve to see those hateful things and feel unsafe. That's what Ty said to me, another constituent of mine, as he highlighted what the true damage from this racial attack was. While the graffiti was an inconvenience and it might have cost a few dollars to repair, there are people from racialized communities who are attacked and feel unsafe in their community. Some mentioned to me that this attack was the first time they were facing this hate, and there were yet others who have faced this hate many times over, like a wound that kept being ripped open without the chance to heal. Either way, we can no longer excuse racism based on the intent of those who inflict it. We need to measure it by the impact on those that are hurt by it. We need to stand up for those that have suffered with this type of pain for far too long and take action so that those with these hateful views are no longer emboldened to do these acts again.

Thank you.

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

2:50

Bill 1 and Lawful Protests

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, plays a role in supporting and ensuring economic recovery in our province. I was eager to support such a bill as many of my constituents have been increasingly vocal in regard to protecting critical infrastructure and our economic future, but I knew it had to be a bill like Bill 1, that respects Alberta's indigenous people's inherent treaty rights alongside the Charter rights of every Albertan.

We've all been witness to the targeted attacks of so-called protestors in regard to the major pipeline projects across this country. When does a protest stop being a protest and start being something else? I think it would be safe to say that there isn't a representative in this room who would be in favour of diminishing our people's rights of assembly and freedom of speech. I hope every Albertan knows that they will always have the right to assemble and protest and voice their opinions and concerns but not on the tracks or in the way of pipeline construction, blocking essential work and creating economic havoc. These blockaders and their organizers are infringing on the rights of others. The illegal rail blockade sent a cascading effect across this country, delaying important shipments of food, propane, oil, and grain. The effects of that action are still being felt today.

As we recover from COVID-19, we cannot leave our resources or our economy at the mercy of paid protesters or anyone else content in hurting Alberta's industries while letting oil come into Canada from human rights violators like Saudi Arabia and Russia. I would encourage any person or group with a message that needs to be heard to do so in front of the Legislature or just somewhere safe, much like those who were protesting Bill 1 this weekend, as ironic as it is, freely protesting their supposed lost right to protest. It requires some mental gymnastics, attempting to understand their logic. But, hey, it's their journey.

At the end of the day, blocking the tracks and blocking pipeline construction isn't protesting. It's illegal.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just standing to give notice that at the appropriate time I would like to move an SO 42 motion. Would you like me to read it now?

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) express its concern with recent reports that 42 per cent of Alberta physicians are considering looking for work outside of Alberta as a result of changes by the government to the physician funding framework;
- (b) urge the government to immediately reconsider these funding changes, which threaten the health care and well-being of Albertans, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (c) urge the government to provide to the Assembly an explanation as to why the government has prevented the Alberta Medical Association from participating in arbitration; and
- (d) urge the government to develop and provide to the Assembly a response plan to ensure that public health care remains stable in light of the potential departure of a large number of physicians from the province.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration,

pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta 2019 annual report.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Hon. members, just a number of moments ago the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre provided oral notice of a Standing Order 42. For those of you who would like a copy, they are located on the tablings table. Please help yourself.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a brief period of time to explain the urgency of the matter before the Assembly. I encourage you to stick to the urgency and not the substance of the debate that should follow.

Physician Retention

Mr. Shepherd:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) express its concern with recent reports that 42 per cent of Alberta physicians are considering looking for work outside of Alberta as a result of changes by the government to the physician funding framework;
- (b) urge the government to immediately reconsider these funding changes, which threaten the health care and well-being of Albertans, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (c) urge the government to provide to the Assembly an explanation as to why the government has prevented the Alberta Medical Association from participating in arbitration; and
- (d) urge the government to develop and provide to the Assembly a response plan to ensure that public health care remains stable in light of the potential departure of a large number of physicians from the province.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. Indeed, I rise pursuant to SO 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion in regard to a matter that is absolutely urgent and pressing. Having just read the motion, if it's all right with you, Mr. Speaker, I will not read it again, but I will get to the substance of why this is urgent and pressing to be debated in this House.

First, I'd like to acknowledge that pursuant to SO 42 I've provided the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies. Further, while a motion under SO 42 requires no notice, my office did provide advance notice to the Speaker of my intention to introduce this motion.

The members of the Official Opposition have repeatedly amplified the calls of physicians in this province to enter into negotiations on physician compensation. We have repeatedly amplified the concern that the way in which this government and the Minister of Health are handling physician compensation would lead to the loss of doctors and services in the province. That's gone unheeded. This past Friday we saw the results of the survey that showed that 42 per cent of Alberta physicians are indeed considering leaving the province for work. That is what is urgent and pressing, Mr. Speaker, that we are looking at 42 per cent, a concerning number.

To be clear, the province has lived through this before. The policies of the government in the late '90s left this province with a decades-long deficit of qualified health professionals. This matter is urgent because we have seen this play out before, and we saw the devastating effects this had on Albertans. This is pressing because we can't afford to stay on this current path and repeat that mistake again. It is worthy of the debate of this Assembly.

AHS has recently posted for 200 physician positions to be filled. That was 200 prior to many of these doctors making a decision to leave. That's 200 doctors, which is why this is urgent – not 10, not 50 but 200 doctors – that in many cases will have to establish a new practice. It is urgent, Mr. Speaker, because it's not just them starting a new job but setting up, stocking, and staffing a new full-time practice, not just taking over an existing practice. And the expectation of these postings is also to work full-time in the emergency department, with no idea of what the compensation will be, as per the AHS postings.

It is urgent, Mr. Speaker, because the people of this province and the doctors who have dedicated their lives to the people of this province deserve to hear the members of this Assembly debate this motion today. They deserve certainty. Our province is aging rapidly; that's why this is urgent. We need more doctors, not fewer. These events only just happened in the past few days, and debating this motion would be an important step to slow the coming exodus of health care workers from this province. I implore the members of this Assembly to allow for the debate of this motion because Albertans are watching, and they are listening.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent. If consent is granted, then we will proceed to debate the motion as presented.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We are now at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Federal Transfers and Benefits

507. Mr. Stephan moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits, including for items listed in the Fair Deal Panel: Report to Government.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and my friends. I rise on Motion 507. The pith and substance of this motion is taxpayer literacy. Increased literacy results in increased accountability. As Albertans grow in awareness of the massive unfair costs they subsidize, the more accountability they will require from government. And accountability is needed more than ever.

Canada is spending itself into oblivion, marching toward bankruptcy, dragging Alberta down with it. Canada is rudderless at a worst possible time, under the control of individuals out of their depths. In this competitive world, in this time of turmoil, our freedoms and prosperity are under siege. What Canada was is less important than what Canada is and, for our children, what it is becoming. Albertans are in despair to see the destructive socialist Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition, all of whom will not hesitate to attack the livelihood of Alberta individuals and families to further their political ambitions for power.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Alberta is a successful, dynamic land with a prevailing culture of excellence, in the words of our Premier, valuing meritocracy over mediocrity. That ethos has allowed Alberta businesses and families

to enjoy prosperity and success unrivalled in the rest of Canada. Our shared freedoms and economic prosperity are a hard-earned inheritance grown out of a populace that valued principles of individual freedom and a free-enterprise economic system.

3:00

A growing socialist ideology within Canada threatens our precious legacy. Focused on forcing equality of outcome over offering equality of opportunity, socialism is incapable of competing and succeeding in the real world. Socialism engenders mediocrity and, with it, envy for Alberta's success and culture of meritocracy incompatible with socialism.

Since 1961 Alberta families and businesses have contributed more than \$600 billion into Canada's partnership while Quebec took more than \$476 billion from it. Anything Alberta receives from Ottawa is a fraction of money from Alberta families and businesses taken from them. Fiscal federalism has evolved into a de facto expropriation of hard-earned monies from Alberta families and businesses to provide structural welfare payments, primarily to Quebec. The Premier of Quebec says that there is no social acceptability for Alberta pipelines while inbound oil tankers sourced from Saudi Arabia are accepted. He also says that one of his favourite things about Canada is receiving equalization. Ponder that: a favourite thing about Canada focused only about what his province takes from others.

A suggested response by the Canadian tax federation is: no more equalization for Quebec. They are correct. The greatest threat to Alberta's and indeed Canada's economic prosperity is government. A lack of pipelines is only a manifestation of the threat. The cause of the threat is government. The fair deal report recommends a referendum on the termination of equalization. Albertans want and will get that referendum. That is in the public interest. Equalization is rigged.

For example, Quebec leverages equalization through its state-controlled Quebec Hydro. Quebec Hydro boasts about providing the lowest residential power rates to Quebecers in all of North America. This has resulted in Quebec having one of the highest per capita swimming pools in North America, including more than California. Quebec is not a tropical paradise. Its swimming pools are a function of Quebec Hydro selling its power to heat those pools at deep discounts to market. As Quebec Hydro artificially sells power at under market, it reduces Quebec's income and fiscal capacity, thereby increasing equalization payments from Alberta families and businesses. Quebec sandbags its hydro income in the billions. This allows to Quebec to leverage and take billions more from Alberta families and businesses. In essence, under equalization Alberta families and businesses pay for and subsidize Quebec Hydro providing the lowest residential power rates to Quebecers in all of North America.

Alberta is in a rigged partnership. In the real world a partnership agreement providing structural welfare payments to partners who are permitted to systematically leverage generosity of contributing partners would never survive. That is equalization. In the real world Quebec would be kicked out of the partnership. It is in the public interest that equalization is terminated. Albertans are deeply disappointed that they are required to go to the extreme length of a referendum to put the profound unfairness of equalization front and centre. A partnership founded on principle and good faith would never cause or tolerate the hostility and hypocrisy endured by their most generous partners, long-suffering Alberta businesses and families.

Madam Speaker, as this motion is acted upon, I am heartened that Alberta, informed Albertans will see equalization for what it truly is, and they will overwhelmingly reject it. How will Ottawa and

Quebec respond when confronted with a principled request for fairness? Will they be principled and act in good faith, or will they respond with indifference or hostility? Forced to confront reality, will they seek to deflect, defer, or distort the truth? Albertans will be watching.

With that, Madam Speaker, I look forward to debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder to not put anything on the microphone on your desk for the sake of *Hansard*, to catch all the words that we say in this House.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the debate on this motion as it is discussed in the Assembly this afternoon. I certainly was hoping that the pressing need for physicians in the province of Alberta, 200 being sought, would have been deemed an important item of pressing urgency, but the government has decided that this is more urgent today than ensuring we have doctors in the midst of a pandemic.

And I have to say that when I had the opportunity to be in all parts of this province as the Minister of Health, people talked about the importance of having good access to quality health care.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we are discussing Motion 507, not a matter which has already been decided by this Assembly. Please continue with the debate on Motion 507.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. One of the reasons why people spoke so much about the importance of good-quality public health care is because it's one of the things that defines us as Canadians. It's one of the things that brings us together as a nation. For example, when I had the opportunity to work with the now Madam Speaker in the chair previously, under our prior roles, it was my pleasure to be able to act on what I believe are the tenets of the Canada Health Act in expanding access to urgent care in the community of Airdrie, something that had never been available 24/7 until the time we were working on that. One of the reasons why I did that in partnership with the member and with Alberta Health Services is because I believe in the tenets that bind us as a nation, including universal public health care.

I think that what we are debating here today, as was evident by first reading of this by the member, is a vendetta and angry hostility towards some of our partners in Confederation. The language that the member used at the time, when talking about – I think the wording was “hostile, parasitic partners” or hostile, parasitic members – I think, reflects . . .

Ms Glasgo: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat with a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Glasgo: Yes, Madam Speaker, on 23(h),(i), and (j). I would say that the member opposite should be cautious as not to impute false motives. She did say specifically that the member had a vendetta. She referenced the member having a specific vendetta. That would certainly be a false motive attributed to the Member for Red Deer-South, and I would encourage the chair to find this as a point of order as this is unbecoming of any Member of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This is not a point of order; this is a matter of debate. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was quoting the very member in the words he used, and I do not recall members of the government jumping up on a point of order against their own member because of the language that he was using at the time, referring to other jurisdictions as a parasitic cousin or partner as part of Canada. The member, by quoting the hon. member's words in this Chamber, is not to create disorder; she's using his words in the purpose of this debate. This is a matter of debate. This is not a point of order. For that reason I would hope that the Speaker will rule that the member can continue in her statement.

Thank you.

3:10

The Deputy Speaker: One member is standing. I don't know if I need further comment on this matter, but you look very eager to offer some additional comments, which I will allow. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be brief as, hopefully, a reward for that. The hon. member that just stood up did talk about remarks that the mover of the motion has made in the House. I'll remind the hon. member that the member actually has apologized for and withdrawn those remarks from this Legislature, so they are no longer in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I will not find a point of order in this matter. However, we are dangerously close to imputing false or unavowed motives to another member when quoting that a member may clearly have a vendetta. As such, it would certainly come close to being a point of order in the future in this House. But I know that your debate on Motion 507 is a very interesting one. All members of this House are eager to hear, I notice, most certainly, very much so, about the motion, not about another member or a matter that has been decided in a previous debate.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, please continue.

Debate Continued

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess I'll continue with reflecting on things that were said in this Chamber, one said just a few minutes ago. The member, when introducing this, talked about Canada spending into oblivion, but certainly we've seen the UCP, the current government, very quickly apply through a loophole to seek federal money from all Canadian taxpayers to pay the UCP HQ hacks who are doing further fundraising for the party. I would love to see evidence that folks who say that we're spending into oblivion actually reflect that through their own party's values.

If the member thought that it was wrong to spend Canadian taxpayer money on party staff working at a party office, then I would have certainly expected the member to have spoken up and fought against that type of spending. It seems that spending for child care and health care in other provinces is in the target for this member, but spending on – and I believe at the time, and maybe it's changed, but I highly doubt it, that the UCP was the only provincial governing party to apply through this federal loophole to seek the allocation of Canadian taxpayer dollars. The member says that they are spending into oblivion, but the only provincial governing party – and definitely Alberta's NDP didn't apply through this loophole

that was intended for charities and small businesses on the verge of bankruptcy.

If the UCP wanted to live by the values that they protest to have in this House today under this member's motion, then why would they be so quick to apply to all Canadians to pay for their party's staff, something that the Premier and the leader of the UCP fought very hard against, at least through words, maybe not through actions, when he spent two decades in Ottawa saying that nobody should be forced to donate to a political party without their consent? Yet this UCP has decided to apply to all Canadian taxpayers through this loophole to make them subsidize their partisan staff working out of their party office headquarters. I think that this is a huge – I'm trying not to use bad words – disservice to the people of Alberta when members come to this place professing that they are working to respect taxpayers when clearly their actions show that they are not. Their actions are quite hypocritical and definitely speak to a different set of values than what is currently being protested in this House.

There are definitely opportunities in the immediate to be able to reflect the value that the member talks about, not wanting to spend into oblivion, if he actually chose to apply those values when in caucus meetings or having opportunities to advocate to the senior leadership within the party and within the cabinet for the UCP. I think that that is one very clear example.

I think another problem that was highlighted was that the member said that equalization is broken. I want to remind the member and all Albertans that the reason why we have the current equalization formula is because the now Premier in the province of Alberta sat around the cabinet table in Ottawa for about a decade of the two decades he spent in Ottawa and actually made changes to the equalization formula that made things worse for the province of Alberta. For somebody to spend 20 years in the House of Commons and their outcome on equalization being that they made us, as individual Albertans and as collective Albertans, pay in more to Confederation and get back less and then saying that you need to come back to Alberta to fix what was broken by the now Premier I find incredibly rich.

I really do hope that everyone stops for a second to reflect on the actual events that led to what we are here today debating. While I happily celebrate Canada Day and the proud traditions upon which our nation is built and the Confederation that we have, including agreements that we make with other jurisdictions like the Northwest Territories, when we in law commit that we will update and communicate clearly about any changes to things like environmental monitoring and then we have written evidence that was published through leaked e-mails, that proves very clearly that the government didn't respect the law or the rule of communicating what was in law with partners in the Northwest Territories. So we have one member of the Assembly come here and refer to "hostile, parasitic partners," bring forward motions that . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, this is now the third time that we're in a situation where we're completely offside the motion in so many different ways, so we will now move on to the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise today and . . .

Mr. Bilous: Under 13(2) could you please explain that decision, taking away the floor?

The Deputy Speaker: I did. Prior to making my ruling, the member for the third time has been now addressed by the Speaker in this Chamber, not speaking to the topic which is at hand, and we are going to move on. That's simply it.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat will start with his full time.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise and speak in support of my colleague from Red Deer-South's motion today.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits, including for items listed in the Fair Deal Panel: Report to Government.

Madam Speaker, this government has committed to Albertans that we will move forward on these issues. Of course, we should be committed to informing Albertans of our progress as well, and I have every confidence that this government will. Transparency is like sunshine. It cleanses. It makes people aware of what's going on. It allows everyone who wants the opportunity to learn, to become engaged, and to help make Alberta better for all of us: our families, our communities, and our public services.

I'm very, very grateful that the Premier asked me to be on the Fair Deal Panel. I'm especially grateful that thousands and thousands of Albertans went to the mic and told us exactly what they thought. Madam Speaker, the powerlessness that so many of them went to the mic and spoke of: I will never forget. They spoke of jobs lost. They spoke of how frustrated they were that Alberta, with the best rules and practices in the world, didn't have resource movement. They were frustrated that Canada as a country doesn't have free trade. Many said: what's a country without free trade? Many spoke of the frustration of elections decided before we even get a chance to vote. They spoke of the frustration that their children, their friends, their business partners don't have full and complete opportunity, and they spoke of the frustration that they shared not having the opportunity to be leaders in Canada. Canada is best when Alberta is strong and providing jobs and wealth and taxes and public services for everybody. Of course, that's not happening.

3:20

Some personal things. The father whose son is a master electrician who used to work in the oil sands who is now a greeter at Walmart: hard to replicate the tears in his eyes. Madam Speaker, the number of retired and semiretired businesspeople that came to me and told me about putting tens and tens of thousands of dollars back into their business, sometimes from their RRSPs because they care that much about their employees: how do you replicate that? How do you make other Albertans understand that? The workers who used to make \$35, \$40 an hour who are now working in the same types of jobs for \$20 or \$25 and less hours, less benefits, less, less, less. I guess the common word there is "less."

Recently the number of businesspeople that have had some success, that have told me their idea now is to move their money out of Canada, move their money out of Alberta: the British Virgin Islands, Costa Rica, Cayman Islands are going to be the recipients of these amounts of money and the jobs and stuff that that could create when these people want to stay here. They want to succeed. They want to help Canada. How frustrating. How powerless.

My colleague and I think others will talk about the \$600 billion to \$670 billion since 1961 that Alberta has paid to the rest of Canada, \$20 billion to \$40 billion a year. I always feel an extra tinge of guilt when I hear that number because I was born in 1961, but I know that together with some sunshine we'll make things better.

The Fair Deal Panel. I really appreciate my colleagues on the Fair Deal Panel, their expertise, how hard they worked, and their ability to dig deep into some issues that I hadn't even thought of. Madam Speaker, I hope that these issues become part of the very transparency that my colleague from Red Deer-South talks about.

National parks: 85 per cent, I think it is, of the land mass of national parks is right here in Alberta. Guess where the headquarters, the office is for national parks? Ottawa.

Diversification programs. In spite of the extra we pay in equalization, transfers, pensions, taxes, it seems like our diversification programs per capita are shortchanged compared to what goes into Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes. Why does this inequity exist, Madam Speaker? A lot of my colleagues from all types of business, from all types of public programs are saying this, especially when the last five or six years have been tough here in Alberta.

Federal Court judges. It's not the Supreme Court, but there's a layer of Federal Court judges. To be a Federal Court judge you have to reside in Ottawa. Apparently and obviously, that restricts our opportunity to be involved because many family people, many community people want to stay in Alberta. America has no such requirement. If you're a Federal Court judge in America, you don't have to live in Washington. Why hasn't this changed?

Madam Speaker and my colleague from Red Deer-South, I hope that one of the things that the government puts out is the information about the heritage trust fund, the \$17 billion or \$18 billion it's at now. I had the opportunity, me and 20 other Wildrosers, to be the Official Opposition in here for three years, from 2012 to 2015. We were very critical of the then government. We wanted answers on why our heritage trust fund was only approximately the \$16 billion or \$17 billion that Premier Lougheed had started with in 1976-1977 and where all this money had gone. The answer continually – we compared it to Norway a lot. We've seen Norway's fund, in the eight years I've been in here, go from, like, \$600 billion to \$800 billion to \$1 trillion. We compared a lot of times to Norway and Norway's fund, and the answer would come back sometimes, quite often: Norway is a sovereign country. Norway doesn't have transfer payments. Norway doesn't pay into Ottawa.

Madam Speaker, let's show all Albertans, let's show all Canadians what we have sacrificed, how much we've been willing to work hard to make this Confederation happen, and let's start to demand our fair deal at the same time. Our heritage trust fund, if we'd have just left the interest in, could be around \$250 billion today instead of the \$17 billion it is. My goodness, that's something that has to be known to our Canadian partners. That's something that all Albertans should be aware of.

Madam Speaker, it's good for Canada. It's great for Canada when Alberta leads the way. Let us set the framework so all provinces can prosper, so all free enterprises, all families and communities that want freedom, that want to prosper, that want opportunity have the way. Alberta: we are the great leader in providing jobs, providing taxes to Ottawa so public services could be well funded, so Canada could be a strong, strong country in the world. Let's show what we can do when Alberta is strong.

What I really like about my colleague from Red Deer-South's motion is that it's based on action, providing information. Madam Speaker, in another four or five months it'll be 20 years since the former Prime Minister and colleagues penned the famous letter of the firewall items, how Alberta should collect its own taxes, control its own immigration, have its own pension plan, have its own police force, and, of course, in today's world have its own chief firearms officer. Twenty years. This has been highly in our sphere of influence and our sphere of what's in the media. It's time that we look at this, and it's time that we push. It's time that we go to our Canadian partners and let them know all the advantages of Alberta

but especially let them know the deep, deep frustration that so many Albertans are feeling.

Madam Speaker, there are many, many ways to do it. Perhaps somebody from the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs should report to the Legislature every 90 days. Perhaps a minister of Alberta getting a fair deal is in order, but it's clear to me – it's clear to me – that after thousands of Albertans went to the mic while I was on the Fair Deal Panel, Albertans are feeling powerless and Albertans want a fairer deal.

I want to close with some stats about 2016. In 2016 my understanding is that Alberta . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in this place and debate Motion 507.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits, including for items listed in the Fair Deal Panel: Report to Government.

Now, Madam Speaker, it is very interesting that the Member for Red Deer-South is raising this because I do not see the legitimization of the political cynicism in the Fair Deal Panel's report as a solution. I know we've heard members such as the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who was on the Fair Deal Panel, address some of these issues just prior to my speaking here, but certainly I think that this is something that is cynical, and I think it's something that is hypocritical of this government. I think that when this government member and this government introduce motions like this and try to sow a divide between us and Canada, between Albertans and Canada, it is something that is this government not being transparent with Albertans. We know this government – and this UCP is the only provincial party in Alberta and is the only governing party in the country, I believe, that took a subsidy from the federal government during this pandemic. When this government introduces motions, when these government members introduce motions and talk about how the west wants out or whatever it is and uses divisive language of this nature, it is unfortunate because it shows that they are talking out of one mouth and doing something completely different.

It's abundantly clear that when this member's own Premier was one of the signing ministers of this plan, of the current equalization formula, when the very Premier that sits in this place was one of the people who was involved in creating the formula that we currently have, which our government – when we were the NDP government, we actually said it deserved a relooking at, of course. But it's completely hypocritical for this member to come up and say that this is an unfair system. It's the very system that his leader helped implement. Has he raised those concerns with his own Premier?

Madam Speaker, is this motion about actual policy direction, or is it simply a way to appease and conduct political spin to appease right-wing separatists? It's becoming pretty clear from the members that we've heard from the government side, both the mover of the motion and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, that they are intending to speak to these separatists, who are trying to divide this nation and divide this province and separate this province.

3:30

We know that's a bad idea. Madam Speaker, the majority of Albertans disagree that we should be doing things in this way. They disagree that we should be separating from the Canada pension plan and creating an Alberta pension plan. They disagree that we should

be bringing in an Alberta police force. They disagree that we should be bringing in these types of separatist talks.

It's becoming abundantly clear that with this government's agenda, the Americanization of all of our services, with the privatization and Americanization of things like health care and education, this government, instead of actually focusing on the issues – and here the member has spoken to Motion 507 to say that this is supposed to be about how businesses are affected disproportionately and families are affected disproportionately. That's in the actual Motion 507. Instead of actually speaking to those issues and speaking to where we can actually help families and businesses by doing things like implementing direct grants, like we have called for and that took this government over 60 days to implement after we called for them, instead of doing things like actually calling for programs that help families and investing in things like child care, instead of doing any of this, this government member decides instead to spin and say: "Oh, well, those feds, those are bad guys. We should separate because the bad guys are the ones that are causing all this pain."

No, Madam Speaker. It's abundantly clear that this government's inaction, during this pandemic and otherwise, is what is actually causing pain for families and businesses across the province. Instead of trying to point fingers and trying to make excuses, this government member should be looking at why we're giving \$4.7 billion away in a corporate handout to already profitable corporations, right? This government and this member, instead of trying to point fingers and make excuses, should be looking at what his government needs to do instead to make sure we can actually support families and businesses, what we need to do to make sure families and businesses can actually have the services they need, can actually have the funding they need.

We know the UCP likes to talk about this Fair Deal Panel, but, Madam Speaker, the reality is that families and Albertans and businesses are feeling left behind. Unlike what this member is trying to do in trying to complain about federal policies, what this member could actually do and what this government could actually do is implement provincial policies today that will make a difference for those families, that will make a difference for those businesses. They could implement things like a commercial eviction ban today. They could do things like extend the residential eviction ban. They could bring in actual services that would help the families in Red Deer.

Instead, this member decides to rise in this place and speak to nothing about what this government could actually do. Instead, this member decides to rise in this place, and in his motion, when he speaks about how the costs are borne by Alberta families and businesses, instead of actually trying to help these families and businesses, he decides that it is more important to point fingers and not actually reflect upon what we are in this place to do, which is to introduce policy, introduce motions and legislation that will actually help our constituents.

Madam Speaker, it's very clear to me – I think it's very clear to members of the opposition – that this is hypocritical and that it's something that shows that this government and these government members are completely tone-deaf to the realities of the fiscal crisis, to the realities of the pandemic, to the realities of this COVID-19 situation. Instead of these divisive politics and instead of this cynicism, we need to have a cohesive solution that is based on fairness and is based on actually collaborating with our partners in federation and is involved in actually talking to Albertans and hearing from Albertans.

Madam Speaker, that's what we did. Here in the opposition we heard from over 30,000 Albertans that they wanted the UCP, they wanted members like the Member for Red Deer-South to keep their

hands off the Canada pension plan. We heard from over 30,000 people, and there were over 3,600 submissions, I believe, to the committee that will never be released because of decisions of the UCP committee members. We heard over and over again that there are concrete actions that can be taken, that there are actual actions that this member could be advocating for, that we could have used a motion for today. He could have said: "Hey, we know Alberta families have a lot of costs borne to them because of the COVID pandemic, and we know that there are a lot of issues. Let's have a motion to, say, talk about those actual programs and what programs we should be implementing."

But instead of talking about actual solutions, instead of trying to say that we need actual answers, instead of trying to say, "What can this Assembly do; what legislation will actually help?", instead of any of that, this member decides to go off and make this sort of political grandstand. I don't know to what end, Madam Speaker, because we know Albertans are not onside with this. We saw this mentioned from over 30,000 Albertans that said that they are not onside with this government's plan to withdraw from the Canada pension plan. We know that they are not on board with things like Americanizing our education and health care. We know that over and over again it is simply the case that this government is offside with many, many Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I think it's disappointing. I think that it's disappointing because we had this opportunity with the Member for Red Deer-South. I know that many of us, members of this place, will never receive in the draw an opportunity to introduce a motion or a bill or any of our own debate. It's disappointing that instead of actually going out and reflecting and saying, "What could he do for his constituents; what could he do for Albertans?" this member decided to point fingers. Instead, this member has decided to sow this sort of cynical separatism across the province. I think that's disappointing.

I think that's disappointing because we know it's hypocritical. We know that this member is a member of a party that has taken federal dollars to subsidize their own political activity. That includes things like political advertising; that includes things like political staff; that includes things like the political operations of their offices, Madam Speaker. We know that on one hand this member is benefiting from federal tax dollars for a wage subsidy that nobody else is taking in this province, that we're not taking, the NDP opposition is not taking, no other governing party in the country, I believe, is taking. On one hand it's saying, "We want out of this unfair deal," but on the other it says, "Let's take as much money as we can."

Madam Speaker, is it a difference of opinion on what types of rules should be in place for Albertans and what types of rules should be in place for the governing party? That is what it seems to be portraying from the government side, that they play by one set of rules and Albertans get an entirely different set. I think that that is something that Albertans will not stand for. Albertans will not be satisfied to hear this member taking federal government money on one hand, through those tax dollars, and then on the other hand saying that Alberta should get out.

Madam Speaker, I think it's become pretty clear that the government and the government members are not thinking critically about this – right? – that they are only trying to use this hypocritical stance to try to sow this discord and try to create this situation where Albertans are upset. We know that that's not what we need. We need unity more now than ever. We need a situation where this UCP government will actually look businesses in the eye, will actually look families in the eye, and will actually speak to them about what we are doing in this place to support them. Again, we're looking at this motion that is talking about how this is

all about the costs borne by Alberta families and businesses, but it's simply not the case.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I am rising to speak about an extremely important issue, an issue our country and our province haven't acknowledged since we first struck oil in 1947. Over the past several decades Alberta has been paying billions of dollars more to the federal government than we receive back in transfers. Albertans are a generous group of people, but many feel as though our province has been treated unfairly. Today as we face a global recession, a collapse of oil prices, and the COVID-19 pandemic, these sentiments have heightened.

Madam Speaker, the Fair Deal Panel report reveals that from 2007 to 2018 Alberta has made a net contribution of approximately \$240 billion to the rest of Canada. When numbers become this large in scale, it becomes hard to correctly gauge how hefty a sum this truly is. We must not think of these numbers in the abstract; in reality the burden of this massive outflow of money from our province is borne by families and businesses. To put this on a per capita basis, \$240 billion is about \$5,000 a year per Albertan for those 11 years. That is over \$20 billion per year, money that could have been used to fix our deficit, pay off our debt, invest in our new infrastructure projects, and revitalize our communities with new hospitals, schools, and roads.

Albertans and other Canadians should be aware of how much our province truly gives to this Confederation. The contributions Alberta has made to Canada have kept our country afloat and funded programs that all Canadians rely on. We subsidize programs in other provinces through these payments. Albertans and indeed all Canadians should at the very least be made aware of these contributions.

3:40

It is incredibly hypocritical of other provinces, like Quebec, that have received hundreds of billions of dollars of these payments, to put in obstacles to our province's success. Many Albertans have expressed that the rest of the country doesn't value helping us nearly as much as we have helped them. Provincial-federal relations in our country are struggling now more than ever, and it is imperative that we find new ways to help each other.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, our province has been hit hard by the recent economic and health crisis. Many of my constituents have lost their jobs and are struggling to put food on the table. Anyone that has worked a day in their life knows that money doesn't grow on trees. It takes hard work and dedication, and people should rightly be rewarded for it.

Madam Speaker, the motion from my colleague from Red Deer-South is calling on our government

to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits, including for items listed in the Fair Deal Panel: Report to Government.

Albertans deserve more. Millions of their hard-earned money are going, and now they're being used to subsidize programs in other provinces. That's why I'm proud to support this motion, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy to rise today to speak to Motion 507 in my cowboy hat in honour of the Stampede.

I think the only thing more Albertan than the Stampede spirit is a common distaste for equalization, so I think these two things go hand in hand today. I can back that number up. As a member of the Fair Deal Panel, with my colleague for Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, we just spent the last five months travelling the province and consulting with Albertans on ways that they believe we can obtain a fair deal within Canada, and the survey responses that we got specifically with regard to equalization stated that about 94 per cent of our 40,000 survey respondents agreed that equalization needs to change. This is a very important motion. I think there is nothing more Albertan than that common distaste, and I'm very happy to speak to it today because our province deserves better, and we need to see change.

If we read this motion into the record, it reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits.

Given that specific wording I thought I'd actually put a little bit of context and some quick facts on the record today just because equalization is such a strongly vast and complex concept. I think it's really important that Albertans understand how equalization works and what exactly it is. Given that I was one of the members on the Fair Deal Panel, equalization was actually one of the topics I had the honour of studying the most, primarily because I found it so fascinating and so complex that I wanted to learn more. I think I'll put some of that information just out there today.

Equalization, as most of us in this House know, is generated from federal tax dollars. It's not literal money that we ship to Ottawa; it's money that is allocated by the federal government. If we look at the numbers, from 2007 to 2018 Alberta made a net contribution of nearly \$240 billion to the rest of Canada, and if you look at that on a tax base of 4.2 million people, that's nearly \$57,000 per Albertan over the last decade, which, frankly, in this economy is more than many people make on an annual salary.

We've given that entirely back to the other provinces in Canada as a net transfer. That's above and beyond what we get back from the federal government in our tax dollars. You know, there isn't a dollar, really, that Alberta gets back from the federal government that we didn't give to them in the first place, and I think that's a really important piece of context. It's not just that we have transferred wealth to the other provinces; it's that this is wealth that's been transferred above and beyond what we've gotten back.

If we look at the Constitution, equalization is actually quite vague. A lot of people know that the formula for equalization is really complex and hard to understand, and it has a lot of strange intricacies. Interestingly enough, that formula is actually nowhere in the Constitution, and the only mention of equalization in the Constitution is in section 36(2), which says:

Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

That's it. There's no formula in the Constitution, just this really vague, high-level concept that's kind of thrown in there without any further explanation or context.

But what that does state is that equalization was initially created to ensure that provinces had equitable services for their residents on equitable tax levels. Equalization was never meant to be a program that just sweepingly transferred wealth from province to province and allowed recipient provinces the ability to spend at their hearts' desire. But that's kind of what it has turned out to be. At this point equalization is not just ensuring equitable levels of public service.

It's actually subsidizing better services in other provinces compared to those who pay into the system.

If we actually look at the numbers, which is really interesting, Alberta – we all know this. Alberta, we've always had a strong economy. We're resource based. We've always been very hard-working, very self-determinant, and, as such, we've always had a strong economy in Alberta. Because of that, we have had some of the highest revenues per capita anywhere in Canada, and one of the youngest working populations.

If we look at the actual equalization payments that have been paid out, if we look on a province-to-province basis, when we look at source revenues per capita, prior to equalization Alberta has some of the highest revenues per capita in all of Canada. Once equalization revenues are paid out and allocated, Albertans actually end up with the second-lowest revenues per capita of anywhere in Canada. So not only is equalization not equalizing; equalization is actually making Albertans the second-poorest province on a per capita level in all of Canada when it comes to federal taxation revenues and investment. Equalization is actually not just not equalizing; it's, frankly, working against us. I think that's a really important piece of the puzzle because a lot of people think that equalization is this wonderful concept that allows us to, you know, make sure all of our fellow provinces have fair and equal public services. But the fact is that it's actually doing the opposite and is disparately hurting Albertans. We are paying so much more in and we're ending up with some of the least in all of Canada. I think all of this is really interesting context just to kind of explain how complicated equalization gets.

If we look at the formula even further – and this is obviously not in the Constitution, which makes things a little bit confusing – the formula itself is calculated based on fiscal capacity, which is a province's ability to generate revenues, deducted from the national average of all the fiscal capacities in Canada, and whether you're at a plus or a minus determines whether you're a have or have-not province and whether you receive equalization revenues or whether you don't receive equalization revenues.

The fiscal capacity which is generated in that formula: 50 per cent of all natural resources are allocated in that fiscal capacity formula. So a province like Alberta, that takes full advantage of harvesting and developing our natural resources, is disproportionately affected because those natural resources, which we allow private companies to develop for us, are accounted for at 50 per cent in the equalization formula, therefore increasing our fiscal capacity. But provinces like Quebec, who the hon. Member for Red Deer-South mentioned, have a huge hydro industry. This also is a natural resource, but because Quebec has chosen to make their hydro industry public and not privatize it, because they've taken it back under control of the government, Quebec's hydro industry is completely exempt from the equalization formula. So their natural resources aren't calculated whereas ours are. It completely skews the balance of what's fair and what's not when we're calculating the fiscal capacity of a province.

There are all these weird intricacies in the formula and in the concept of equalization that need to be addressed. Frankly, it's long overdue that they've needed to be addressed. Our province has been bearing – frankly, our province and many of the western provinces have been significantly bearing the brunt of equalization payments for some time. I mean, it was manageable when times were good, but over the last few years Alberta has been thrown into quite a deep economic recession. This is not by the doing of Albertans. This is not by global market forces. This has been done specifically by the governments that regulate equalization. It's ironic how that works. Alberta's recession – we've really been thrust into this recession by policies and by opposition to the development of our natural

resources by both the previous Alberta government for the last four years and by the federal government. We've actually not only had a formula in our Constitution that's working against Albertans; we've actually had governments representing Albertans working against our interests. When you couple these things together, equalization has had detrimental effects on our province.

We've been in this deep recession. We've lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. You know, we've had to spend more than we can afford to. If we weren't transferring all of this wealth to other provinces while we were in a recession, to subsidize them running government surpluses, just think how much better off Alberta would be. Think how much less debt we would have. Think how much better public services and better infrastructure we could provide for our citizens if we were not subsidizing governments like Quebec to run surpluses with our money. It's ludicrous when you look at the numbers that not only is Quebec just breaking even and having a balanced budget, but they're actually running surpluses with our money that's subsidizing their public services.

3:50

Madam Speaker, change to equalization is long overdue. Perhaps even the abolishment of equalization is long overdue, which I think many members of this House would agree with, and I believe many Albertans and those that we heard at our Fair Deal consultations would agree with, that it's time for equalization to go, and if we can't get that far, then it's time for equalization to at least be strongly amended to help Albertans and to help our economy to at least be treated equally.

You know, Albertans are self-determinant. We are hard working, and we work hard so that we can provide for those around us and give back to our families. That's the core of the Albertan spirit. We are hard working, we love each other, and we build strong communities because we're hard working and we're willing to give back to each other. But, frankly, it's long overdue, and the rest of Canada has not been giving back to us, and we deserve to be treated better in this federation. Whether that means that we abolish equalization altogether or that means that we at least need to strongly amend the formula so that the results aren't skewed against us, something needs to change because Alberta has been mistreated for far too long. Frankly, we don't only deserve a fair deal; we need a fair deal. We've given so much to this federation, and the least it can do is to at least treat us equally and fairly in this country.

As a member of our Fair Deal Panel I was so honoured to work on the equalization file and to inevitably end up recommending to the government that we do pursue a referendum to remove equalization from the Constitution, which I believe we are moving forward with next election. I'm not sure if that will be the exact question on the ballot, but . . .

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to speak to Motion 507, which states:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise Albertans' awareness of the direct and indirect costs borne by Alberta families and businesses to disproportionately subsidize federal transfers and benefits, including for items listed in the Fair Deal Panel: Report to Government.

This was put forward by my colleague from Red Deer-South. I think it's a great opportunity that we have to discuss this motion and pass this motion, which is going to bring light to Albertans on the true costs of the transfer payments. The list of costs is huge, but I just want to touch on a few of them.

To start with, I want to look at the economic climate that we're in right now. It's been tough in Alberta, of course. Our unemployment is above 15 per cent. Our economy has been buffeted by the oil crisis, touched off by the Saudi Arabia and Russia price war, the economic downturn, and, of course, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even a province with stellar finances would face a hard time dealing with these issues, but our job was compounded by the incompetence of the previous government, who raised taxes and drove investment out of our province and, of course, couldn't get pipelines built either. In fact, they were actually protesting pipelines. It will be a rough road ahead, but we will recover, as we always do, through the hard work and sweat of Albertans.

However, a large portion of Alberta's efforts has not been going towards rebuilding our economy. No. Instead, thanks to the federal system of transfers and benefits, billions of dollars flow east never to return. It's hard to believe that even in these times, that we have not seen since the '30s, Alberta is still considered the cash cow of Canada. Over the 11-year period of 2007 to 2018 \$250 billion, or about \$60,000 per Albertan, was sent to Ottawa more than what we received back. That is mindboggling. Not to mention that when we attempt to expand our oil pipelines, we are met with delays, with protests by radical environmentalists, who would rather prop up regimes like Venezuela's than see one barrel of Alberta oil reach market. We've seen our oil move from the west coast to the east coast via the Panama Canal. Now, that doesn't make sense financially, and it doesn't make sense environmentally either.

Surely the federal government is aware of the vast amount of money that Alberta sends their way and treats us with respect as a major contributor in Confederation? The answer, according to many Albertans we heard from during the Fair Deal Panel, is that we are not treated fairly. This, Madam Speaker, is why we need to continue to raise awareness to Albertans on where their hard-earned dollars go and what cost that is to Alberta. We need Albertans to know just how much money has been sent in federal transfers. We need to have a frank conversation about how we will move forward in the future. These details are important.

Albertans are frustrated. We've seen that frustration every day as we go into our constituencies, as the Fair Deal Panel crossed Alberta. The frustration is huge. There are lots of rumours and misinformation on the transfer payments and how that system works and how the funds are transferred back and forth between Alberta and Ottawa, and this motion will help to clear this up.

Now, for some reason we just a few minutes ago listened to the NDP Member for Edmonton-South speak against this motion. I'm not sure how you could speak against gathering information so that Albertans can see exactly what's going on by providing light to this situation. Obviously, the NDP is not interested in getting information to Albertans so they can make decisions for themselves; they'd rather lock things up and shut things down. It's shameful to think why they would suggest that gathering information for Albertans is wrong. Now, we're discussing options to help improve our situation. This will help this process to give Alberta more autonomy.

Again, Madam Speaker, when we look at this motion, it is a simple motion, but it's important. It's important to have this information for Albertans. It's important to have things clearly spelled out. It'll give us an opportunity to provide some of this information to the rest of Canada, too, so that we can go forward, we can get a fair deal for Alberta, and make sure that Albertans understand completely what's going on with this situation.

Again, Madam Speaker, we need to have this frank discussion here in Alberta and, of course, across Canada as we move forward. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, according to Standing Order 8(3) the mover of the motion now has five minutes to close debate. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The NDP have attacked me for speaking the truth. The truth makes them angry. My motive is for fairness and the public interest, for the people of Alberta, whom I love.

Another exciting potential opportunity for Albertans is to transition out of the CPP into an Alberta pension plan as described in the Fair Deal report. Here are some facts. Alberta businesses and workers contribute each year around \$3 billion more to the CPP than is paid to Alberta retirees. In 2019 the Trudeau Liberals, aided and abetted by the former NDP government, commenced a 20 per cent increase to CPP contribution rates over the next four years, penalizing employment, destroying Alberta jobs and economic competitiveness. That is their legacy. The Trudeau Liberals continue to double down on this huge payroll cost increase, a foolish policy in a recession, a cost increase disproportionately borne by Alberta businesses and workers, who grossly subsidize the CPP for everyone else.

Under the socialist occupation of the NDP there were net losses of tens of thousands of private-sector jobs. This was one of the NDP's greatest failures. Ending a \$3 billion subsidy from Alberta businesses and workers towards transitioning towards an Alberta pension plan could produce a game-changing competitive advantage for Alberta, reducing payroll taxes to the lowest in Canada while maintaining benefit amounts for Alberta retirees. This is exciting. It is inexplicable that this former socialist NDP government is so weak, so opposed to even exploring the potential of this game-changing competitive advantage, that could result in many more jobs for Albertans while leaving billions more in the hands of Alberta businesses or workers and not in the hands of Ottawa.

Trudeau knows that without this \$3 billion subsidy from Alberta businesses and workers he will need to increase CPP contribution rates for everyone else. Trudeau and his puppets, including this former NDP government and their union bosses, will try and scare Albertans into thinking that they are not capable . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Bilous: Sure: 23(h),(i), and (j). The member is clearly trying to create disorder by referring to our NDP opposition as Trudeau puppets. I know for a fact that the Minister of Transportation would be on his feet in a heartbeat if any member on this side of the House referred to another political party or opposition or governing party as a political puppet. That language is offensive, it's meant to create disorder, and I request that the chair ask the member to apologize and withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm sorry that the hon. member is offended by a historically accurate rendition of what has happened in the past. What I think we have here is a disagreement. The Official Opposition has decided to be offended by the member closing on his drawn member's motion. You know, we traditionally let people have their hour. Nonetheless, the hon. House leader from the opposition: he's upset. This is at worst a difference of opinion.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, while sometimes and probably in this case there may be some language that certainly upsets members of this House – and I can understand that – I would ask the member to keep that in mind as he continues his debate in this discussion. I will not find a point of order, but I will express caution as you continue with the closing remarks.

Debate Continued

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The truth is the antidote to their fear. Acting on this motion will increase awareness of this game-changing opportunity and others in the fair deal report. Possession of the truth and the confidence to act thereon are founded upon engaged and informed Albertans holding government to account to serve the public interest, to free our businesses from hostile interference, and insulate our families from their looming \$1 trillion debt train wreck. Time is of the essence. It is urgent that Alberta take decisive, prudent steps for greater self-reliance. Self-reliance and leverage are inextricably connected. The greater Alberta's self-reliance, the less Ottawa is needed, and the less Ottawa is needed, the greater Alberta's leverage for a fair deal.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues for participating in this debate, and I will end it.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:03 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Rowswell
Amery	Loewen	Rutherford
Barnes	Lovely	Sawhney
Dreesen	Luan	Schow
Fir	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	McIver	Singh
Glubish	Neudorf	Stephan
Guthrie	Orr	Walker
Hanson	Reid	Wilson
Hunter	Rosin	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Irwin	Sigurdson, L.
Deol		

Totals: For – 30 Against – 7

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

4:20

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 33

Alberta Investment Attraction Act

[Adjourned debate July 8: Ms Schulz]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 33? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 33, the Alberta Investment

Attraction Act, at its second reading. I'm going to point out a few elements of this bill that I find very, very interesting, and then I'll leave my opinion or my intention on whether to support this bill or not for the end. So we'll make this a little bit of a cliffhanger for folks in the Chamber today.

Now, at the onset, Madam Speaker, we support the attraction of investment into Alberta. I can tell you as the former minister of economic development and trade that we were able to work with a number of companies, bringing them to Alberta, including Amazon, including RocketSpace, including MobSquad, that set up shop in Calgary, a number of other companies that chose to invest and do business in Alberta. Now, I will, you know, applaud the minister on the idea of Invest Alberta because that was part of her department when the UCP formed government. In fact, we created the Invest Alberta branch within economic development and trade.

Now, I can tell you that there were a number of different policy levers that we used in order to support the attraction of companies, one of which, of course, the current government cancelled. That was the capital investment tax credit. That tax credit leveraged and saw investments north of tens of billions of dollars because of a program: for the capital investment tax credit, Madam Speaker, any company – this was used as a way to attract international investment – could apply for 10 per cent nonrefundable, up to \$5 million, for deploying capital at a time when, of course, Alberta and the world were suffering from a collapse in the price of oil, obviously, Alberta more so than many other jurisdictions in Canada but elsewhere as well, because of our overreliance on a single commodity, of which we have no control over the price. Now, obviously, as you're well aware, Madam Speaker, we continue to face hardship because of the compounding effect between COVID-19 but also, you know, the struggle that our energy sector is facing. Now, the capital investment tax credit was very successful and was a tool that we used to help attract investment, but it wasn't the only tool.

I'll talk a little bit about what this bill is proposing. I can tell you that thus far this current government's track record on stimulating jobs in the economy is dismal. Last year, pre-COVID, Alberta unfortunately lost 50,000 full-time jobs. That's under this government. I know they love to talk about the previous NDP government, but that was even with the announcement of their reduction in the corporate tax structure, which, of course, the Premier and this government believe to be the silver bullet. Of course, their sole proponent or economist that they love to quote is Jack Mintz, who, of course – you know, if he had it his way, there would be no taxes, and therefore there would be no roads and no hospitals and no schools. That's okay. We can just look at the fact that then business would have to pay nothing.

The corporate tax reduction did not actually spur the investment that this government promised Albertans it would. Again, their "jobs, economy, pipelines," which grammatically doesn't even make sense – but that was their campaign slogan in 2019 – hasn't resulted in jobs. The corporate tax reduction: I mean, unfortunately, we saw companies take their savings and decide to invest in other jurisdictions. Now, again, I'm not criticizing those companies – they make their decisions through their own processes – but it's frustrating that a tool that this government touted as the silver bullet for the province, in fact, was more of a silver bullet for other jurisdictions in other provinces. Husky took their \$300 million and said: we're going to invest in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and the U.S. That was a nice little gift from this UCP government to a company to go invest elsewhere, and I think the people of Saskatchewan thank us for subsidizing investments in their province and for the jobs that it created in Saskatchewan.

You know, the government now has doubled down on the corporate tax rate and accelerated its pace. Now, I appreciate that

for businesses that does mean a savings for them, absolutely, and there are many businesses around the province that like the idea of a reduction in the corporate tax rate. But I will remind members of this Chamber, as I did since 2015, that Alberta had the combined lowest tax rate in the country. That's even back when there was a carbon tax. You know why, Madam Speaker? It's because in Alberta there is no PST, there is no payroll tax, there are no health care premiums. Those savings kept Alberta as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada.

Now, taxes: for some companies, maybe they make or break on where they go. I'd love for a member to identify a company that says: "You know what? We only look at taxes. That's all we care about." In my time as minister of economic development and trade there was not a single company that said: that is the only factor that we look at. In fact, companies like Amazon had a very strong bid from the city of Calgary with the support of the provincial government. We also provided some conditional incentives to attract them, their HQ to Alberta. You know what Amazon said, Madam Speaker? They said: "No. Taxes: we don't care. Like, we're looking at other jurisdictions where we would pay much more in taxes even in Canada; in Ontario, for example."

The number one concern that Amazon has and companies like Amazon is talent, and the way to grow talent is to invest in our postsecondaries. Unfortunately, this government has been very, very clear that that's not a priority for them. In fact, a program that we announced creating 3,000 new tech spaces to increase the talent pipeline – another critical pipeline that somehow this government has failed to identify or recognize is growing talent here in the province which will support our local businesses, our companies here. Guess what many tech companies in Alberta are doing? They're finding talent from other countries, bringing them here because we don't have enough graduating. We have some of the best universities and postsecondaries in the world, hands down, absolutely. We have incredible talent, we have opportunity, but we need to expand that pipeline, and this government has done nothing to do that. In fact, they killed programs that were doing that.

So Amazon said to the city of Calgary – I know this because I was in the room – that the reason that Calgary didn't make the short list is because of the lack of available talent. This blind praise of just lowering corporate taxes and thinking that that is the silver bullet, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, is naive, and I encourage members to go talk to companies who are looking at where they can set up shop.

Again, you know, we have now through this bill the creation of Invest Alberta as a third-party corporation or as a Crown corporation, arm's length. That's fascinating because I'm really starting to question the role of the minister if you have this entity, because that was my job as minister of economic development and trade. Now, this is one more thing that is given to a third party. I'm not sure what the minister is doing with her budget, but for this budget, I mean, I want to be optimistic, because the idea of Invest Alberta, again, we stood up as a department within the ministry of economic development and trade because we recognized the importance of that. But I can tell you that if this entity is going to function at all like the war room: God help us, Madam Speaker, because that's just been a waste of taxpayers' dollars that has bungled every file that they've laid their hands on. The worst part about it is that the person they put in charge of it boggles my mind.

4:30

Now, here's the connection to this bill. Guess who our Houston representative is. A very long resume of oil and gas, comes from the energy sector – no. I'm sorry. I'm reading the wrong resume. No. He was a former MLA. I have great respect for him

individually. I question his appointment as the Houston rep to attract investment and engage companies down there. I think that there are many other more-qualified Albertans, but I've got to tell you that even if you try to argue this isn't patronage, the optics are terrible. I mean, he did step aside for the leader of the UCP, now Premier, to run. Does it look like a little parting gift? That's what Albertans are saying to me, Madam Speaker, that it smacks of cronyism, and the same arguments that this government has made, that they wouldn't do that or shouldn't do that: they are doing that.

You have that gentleman down in Houston, and then, of course, we have a Crown corporation that's going to have a board, again, focusing on attracting investment to Alberta. Now, questions that I have for the minister on this bill: so there are four different tools that the corporation will have. They can – this is in section 6. Well, I'll read it all.

(6) If authorized by regulations made under this Act . . .

Of course, Madam Speaker, you know, regulations are made by Executive Council, which is behind closed doors, don't have to be released to the public, but,

the Corporation may, in carrying out its mandate, directly or indirectly,

(a) make a loan of money, or acquire an existing loan of money,

Now, I hope the Member for Red Deer-South is listening to this, because this is a blank cheque that this legislation is giving to a third-party Crown corp, and if he is, you know, true to his word, that he's worried about finances and deficits and debts – well, let's just look at what the price tag is that Invest Alberta has. Oh, right; there isn't one. There is no limit on how much they can loan.

They can "issue loan guarantees." They can "purchase shares or other forms of equity." Now, on the face of it, I don't disagree with that, that the government of Alberta having an opportunity to be able to invest means that we will get a return on investment, depending on what the company is, how it's vetted, who's looking at their books, their growth, et cetera. Or they can "enter into joint ventures or partnerships."

Now, I'm not opposed to the government or this entity having these tools. My question is: who's watching it? Who's putting collars on it? There is no maximum amount, so how do we know as taxpayers that this entity isn't overvaluing a company and offering a blank cheque to them to come here, because we know this government is desperate for some kind of win in the private sector because – I don't know – I don't think you have one yet. I mean, I haven't been able to find one.

What are they offering to companies in order to relocate here? I think it's a question that a lot of members should be asking. I know Albertans are reaching out and saying, you know, that this tool or these four tools that the government is creating through this legislation: what controls are put in place? Now, I'm curious, and I hope I'm going to see many UCP private members jump up and talk about this. Again, I mean, if you're concerned about deficits and spending, well, this is a blank cheque because there's no limit on it. I mean, at least with the capital investment tax credit there was a limit on it, Madam Speaker. It was \$5 million per company, and they had to qualify. There was a strict set of rules and parameters for companies to qualify. The decision was not political. It was actually made within the department.

Now, I appreciate that the folks over there will jump up and say, "Well, that's why this is a Crown corporation," although so far any trust that I was about to give is dissolved in your first appointment of the Houston rep, just because of – I mean, you know, great guy, but a former MLA that suddenly has a \$250,000 job. Now, I appreciate his experience as an MLA, his experience before taking this position, but I really question if there weren't and the

government of Alberta wasn't able to find someone more qualified to take that position.

Now, as I had mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, when we talk about companies like Amazon and others that we're trying to bring and attract to Alberta, they will talk about talent as their first, most important factor when looking at where to relocate, where to set up offices. Geography does matter, but they'll also look at quality of life, which is interesting. That means good publicly funded, publicly delivered schools. That means investing in our health care system, not picking fights with doctors and sending them away.

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

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The bill that we are discussing is Bill 33, the Alberta Investment Attraction Act. Under the socialist occupation of the NDP investment was not attracted to Alberta; it fled. Under the occupation of the NDP tens of thousands of fewer private-sector jobs was their legacy. The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and their socialist NDP government did not know how to compete and succeed in the real world. His solution was the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit.

Kim Moody is one of the leading tax professionals in Alberta and in the country. I will read what he said about their credits on the website for Moodys Tax. This is in the public domain, and I invite any members of this Assembly and, Madam Speaker, through you, any Albertans to go and see and determine what the fruits of their policies that were flawed were. This is what Kim Moody said about the NDP's solution:

Similar to the [Alberta investor tax credit], the [capital investment tax credit] program is fraught with bureaucracy, is short term in nature, is not refundable . . . is overly prescriptive and full of unnecessary reporting steps.

The real winners under these two . . . credit programs appear to be the government employees who will be hired to administer the programs. While the use of investment tax credits can often be good to stimulate economic investment, the AITC and CITC programs developed by the [NDP] government are a textbook example of the creation of a program that is overly bureaucratic, ridiculously uncertain . . . and condescending. Apparently the [NDP] Alberta government knows better than the marketplace which investments are worthy of a credit and which ones are not.

Very disappointing.

That was the summary of the evaluation of these credits.

Madam Speaker, this is my first term as an MLA, and I will confess that I like the NDP more since the election. Albertans fired them and sent them into the corner, where they can't harm Alberta businesses and families any further. I like them over there much better.

To attract investment to Alberta, Alberta must be the most attractive jurisdiction to start and grow a business. That is how we attract investment into Alberta. Under the NDP: they were uncompetitive. They did not know how to compete in the real world. Billions in capital fled Alberta. Alberta must be the most competitive jurisdiction to start and grow a business. That is what we are focused on. That is what this government is focused on.

4:40

That is a function of a few variables. One is a function of tax policy. It is also a function of eliminating red tape. The members opposite are confused about what constitutes red tape. Red tape is when you have a rule where the cost of compliance with that rule exceeds the benefit of that rule in terms of the public interest. This government is focused on eliminating red tape to protect and

enhance the public interest. It is also a function of erasing destructive NDP policies that disincen[t] employment, destructive NDP policies that disincen[t] employment.

Madam Speaker, I'm excited that we are bringing forth legislation to erase their destruction.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 33 in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. I just want to address this in second reading, Bill 33, of course, and to say to all members of the House here today that of course I support the attraction of investment to this province. I have since I was a city councillor in Calgary in 1995. I'll get into that in a little bit in terms of the success we had in helping to make Calgary one of the best places to live in all of Canada.

I do want to say that the creation of Invest Alberta, that my colleague just spoke to, within the economic development and trade ministry, when we were there, was the method or action or vehicle for attracting investment to Alberta. Under our government we helped the Pembina Pipeline to facilitate a joint venture with Petrochemical Industries Company of Kuwait building a \$4.5 billion petrochemical plant in the province, significant through the actions of people in the ministry, people in Invest Alberta that were in place under our government. I certainly get why we need to attract investment to this province. With regard to the economic recovery that's necessary for all Albertans, I think we all stand together and agree that Alberta definitely needs an economic plan that revitalizes this province and reattracts investment, does better with the companies that are here.

I thought that earlier in the day – I was in the back and listening to question period – I understood the Premier to have talked about the economic decline in this province that's happened under COVID and under the drop in world oil prices, and I thought he said that the GDP went from \$360 billion to \$300 billion. I heard him say – and I may have got it wrong – I thought he said an 8 per cent decline in our GDP, but that's obviously bigger than 8 per cent. Perhaps he said 18 per cent. It seems like it's about 15 per cent, so there has been a significant drop in our GDP.

Of course, that is problematic for all of us in Alberta. It means that currently there are over 300,000 Albertans that are out of work and wondering where they're going to find employment in this province. Anything that attracts investment to the province, as I said, under the ministry auspices of Invest Alberta that we were engaged with or under this one that's put forward by the minister to help those 300,000 Albertans, is a good thing.

I know it's written in the bill, the diversification of that investment, so that we have a broader range of sectors that are doing well and can mitigate against drops in things like the world oil prices. That's critical in any recovery plan going forward. Certainly, it was our focus to diversify the economy in different sectors, and we were having some success in all of that. I'm very proud of the work of the former minister, the work of the government to make that happen. We need to diversify the economy so that everyone has a fair shot at doing better in this province, at landing a good job in an area they're interested in in a diversified economy, and everyone can get a fair share of benefits of a growing economy in this province. We're not growing at this point in time, so we need to have an economic plan that reverses that course and helps us all, particularly those 300,000 Albertans that are out of work, do better.

I want to talk a little bit about the way investment was attracted to the city of Calgary in the years that I worked there. Not the former mayor but the one before that, Mayor Al Duerr, who was there from

'89 to 2001 in Calgary: I can remember very clearly how he did a pretty stellar job of going through a downturn in the economy. Early in his term there wasn't a lot of ability to invest because of the challenges that Calgary and Alberta were going through attracting investment in the early '90s. I'll never forget it. He said that, you know, he went to Montreal at one point in time and talked to CP Rail, who were searching, as a result of the referendum in Quebec, for a new place to put their corporate head offices. Like every mayor of a major city, Mayor Duerr trooped down to the head offices of CP Rail and talked with them about what life in Calgary was all about. He spent a lot of time, he told us on council, talking about the quality of life for families, for individuals in Calgary.

What he meant by that, quality of life, is the very things that my colleague who was a previous minister of economic development talked about, the things that families need. Like, they need really good schools. They need quality health care for them and their loved ones. They need, you know, postsecondary schools that are challenging and can allow young people moving on to postsecondary to try and meet their goals in life through education, technical colleges, those things. They also need a diversified economy, something that they can see themselves working in or their loved ones working in. He was saying that you attract investment by making sure that all of those baseline considerations for people in communities are there. So he spent time talking to the leadership of CP Rail about housing prices, where they can recreate, the quality of the road structure, the quality of the infrastructure generally, and those other things that I mentioned, particularly postsecondary institutions, technical colleges, elementary schools for their children, health care. Those are the very things that the previous government, the NDP government, was focused on and working to make sure were there for all Albertans.

I just wanted to make that reference because I think some of the challenges that I feel with this government today are that we're seeing life change drastically in many of those areas. We're seeing, of course, fights with doctors taking place. We're seeing teachers very concerned about their futures and the futures of the students that they teach. We're seeing postsecondary institutions struggling with significant cuts to their budgets. All of those things, Madam Speaker, will make it more difficult to attract businesses to this province for investment, and we do need a lot of investment because we seem to be going backwards in GDP, not forward.

4:50

I do like a few things in here, and I hope to get to them in my time remaining, but I do have questions, too, and perhaps a minister under 29(2)(a) or at some other point can speak a little more to high-value and high-impact investments and what kind of metric the corporation that's developed under this bill will be able to point to. For instance, "a high-value investment is an investment that is reasonably expected to perform better relative to other investments in the economic sector that the investment relates to." Just what does "better" mean? Is it 1 per cent better? Is it much better than that? I just don't know because it's not here, but I understand that under regulations and when the corporation gets stood up, they'll probably spend more time working on that.

And the second part, under 2(b): "a high-impact investment is an investment that is reasonably expected to support significant job creation or economic growth relative to other investments in the same . . . sector." It's not all that drawn out or penciled out at this point in time. It just is very, very generic, and I have some interest in learning what those metrics might be if the minister or others might want to address it.

Then I wanted to just look at the board-appointment process. I've read it through and understand it, but I'm not sure that it will follow

– and if the minister wants to get up and talk about it, that’s great – the agencies, boards, and commissions appointment process that was put in place before, where any member of the public can apply to the board. Certainly, those members that were chosen in the past under our government for different agencies, boards, and commissions had the skills and abilities that we looked for on different agencies, boards, and commissions, but the fact that it was a public application process at least made it clear to Albertans that we were endeavouring to have a process in place that was fair for all Albertans to at least be aware of and apply to. Not all Albertans heard back, of course, when they applied, but we got many, many, many good people coming forward. I’m just interested in that process.

The part I like is under Chief Executive Officer, section 7(2): “shall determine the remuneration to be paid to the [CEO] in accordance with the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.” That tells me that there’ll be a limit placed on that person’s compensation in accordance with the compensation act that we put a lot of effort into.

I think that there’s one more piece that I just want to kind of underline. The difficulty in attracting investment to this province, I think, is because of some of the things going on right now. I was a member of the Democratic Accountability Committee earlier today, Madam Speaker, and I was discouraged that the government members of that committee didn’t rule in support of a motion or two that we brought forward, which would essentially say: we don’t want to spend time talking about separation in terms of a referendum in this province.

Separation, or exiting from Canada, is not in the interests of being able to reach out to companies across the world or across Canada to attract them here. It’s very uncertain. You know, we hear it all the time: businesses want certainty going forward. If you’re essentially playing footsie with Wexiteers, I don’t see how you can develop any certainty that Alberta is going to be in Canada for the long term, not you personally playing footsie with Wexiteers but others in this House doing that same sort of thing.

I’d just reiterate that any talk of separation is the antithesis of developing certainty going forward. Public services that aren’t robust and are a concern to Albertans – you only have to open the paper, Madam Speaker, to see that a number of public-service sectors in this province are very concerned with the direction of this government, and I think that those people who are looking at Alberta for potential ...

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don’t think I’m going to be using up the entire time under 29(2)(a), but I have to address something that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo just said. Albertans, regardless of political stripe, deserve to be consulted on things that are going on in their province, and we have legislation on the Order Paper talking about that. For that member to come in here and say that we’re playing footsie with Wexiteers is such a tremendous amount of disrespect. One, if you want to call public consultation footsie, I think you’re in the wrong Chamber. Second, whether that member or anyone in this Chamber disagrees with the principles of the Wexit movement is irrelevant. Our job is to represent all Albertans. So for that member to stand up here and be so disrespectful and callous towards Albertans, the same Albertans that rejected him and his party in record numbers, shows how obtuse he is towards what’s actually going on in this province.

I can’t imagine coming in here and saying that I’m doing my job by playing footsie with my constituents. Footsie: what kind of

ridiculous thing to say is that? We have a job to do here. I’m not going to say that it’s frustrating because – you know what? – it’s their decision to say those kinds of things, and I’m not going to allow what those members say affect how I feel. I will say this much. My constituents – my constituents – do not approve of that kind of language. To think that we don’t have a job to consult them, to go knock on their door – these members would actually have the audacity to try to impede us from doing that consultation.

I believe that Alberta needs a fair deal in Confederation. I believe that Alberta needs to get a fair shake at this thing. We have contributed hundreds of billions of dollars to the cause. [interjections] I hear the members heckling right now. I will give them this credit. There are few people who can heckle like the NDP, but it’s coming from a place of anger. It’s a place of anger because they’re so mad with Albertans, mad that they got absolutely obliterated in April 2019. They don’t trust Albertans, Madam Speaker, so they don’t want to get out there, and they think that we shouldn’t consult Albertans, to the point where they would actually degrade themselves and call consultation footsie.

This is the same member who got up at a protest recently and tried to suggest that all the bills that we’ve put here are a waste of time, that they’re bad for Albertans. I’m sorry. Members, I am sorry that our job in here is to protect Albertans from sex offenders. I’m sorry that our job is to protect vulnerable Albertans. I’m sorry that in that member’s opinion, that’s a waste of time. I’m sorry that I’m doing my job, and these members can’t even be bothered to show up, figuratively speaking.

Madam Speaker, I just think it’s terrible that that member would get up in this Chamber and speak on this bill and suggest that we are not supposed to do our jobs.

Ms Glasgo: It’s a mockery.

Mr. Schow: It’s a mockery of this House. Thank you, Member. That’s a great way of explaining it. It’s a mockery of this Chamber. It’s a mockery of this job, and frankly it’s a mockery of Albertans. But that doesn’t surprise me coming from a member and coming from a party that does not think Albertans know what’s best for them, does not want Albertans to be consulted on something like CPP.

5:00

You know what? I know there are Albertans out there who think that we should separate. I know there are. So do we ignore what they have to say, or do we listen to them? Whether we agree with them or not, we listen to them. Apparently that member and other members of the NDP caucus think that because they disagree with someone’s point of view, not only do they completely disregard it, but they belittle it. I don’t know why they ran for office – that’s their decision – but I ran for office because I love the people of Cardston-Siksika, and I love the job that I was elected to do.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 33 in second reading? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise on second reading of Bill 33, which is what we’re actually debating. You know, I think it’s important to say right off the bat that we absolutely support the attraction of investment in Alberta, which is precisely why my colleague noted earlier that we created Invest Alberta within the department of economic development and trade while we were in government.

I would like to speak a little bit about this piece of legislation and, you know, really, some of the questions I have that are related to

some of the things that are contained in here. It's my hope that somebody will be able to provide us some clarity about some of the questions that we have.

You know, before I begin, I do want to say that I do think it's important, the language that we use in this place, and I think, clearly, the member opposite was insulted, which is fine. That's certainly his right to be. But I would also note that just previous to the speaker who stood and talked about "playing footsie with Wexiteers," I think is what he said, there was another member from Red Deer that stood up and called us, being democratically elected to this place, a "socialist occupation." I would suggest that that language is inflammatory in the sense that countries have endured real occupation, and it's a real thing. So I would suggest that we should all maybe watch the words that we use.

In any event, to continue with Bill 33, I do think it is important to attract investment to Alberta, but I also think that, like my colleague suggested, companies, which are essentially made up of people, when they look to invest or to move or to lay down roots and to create some growth, look at more things than just: what is the corporate tax rate there? They look at all kinds of things that are important to families because we know that businesses are made up of people. They do look at education. They do look at health care. They most certainly look at postsecondary education. As my colleague noted, many of the newer companies in the up-and-coming technology are looking at the people that are graduating out of postsecondary. Sadly, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that people are really uncomfortable right now that work in postsecondary, that are also actively in postsecondary because they feel that they're worried about the direction that this government has taken, and I think rightly so. Just after two budgets we've seen significant cuts to postsecondary education.

We have seen, you know, just in Calgary alone – let's have a look – public reporting noted that Mount Royal University: the board of governors voted a 7 per cent increase for domestic students. Now, keep in mind that the UCP government removed the cap and that universities, postsecondary institutions really don't have a lot of options but to do this. Essentially, the UCP government is creating or adding to the revenue, and it's on the backs of domestic students through increasing – I think it's prime plus 1 now – the interest rate on student financing. All of these things have implication.

So when we're seen as a less competitive place even for postsecondary students that are looking around, if they have a couple of different choices to make, they're not simply going to look at, you know: "What's the corporate tax rate?" or "What is the tax rate in Alberta?" They're going to look at a lot of things. Sadly, Madam Speaker, I think that all of the things that are happening in Alberta are alarming to people in other parts of the country. Some of those things are publicly reported battles that the government of Alberta, the UCP, is having with doctors. Now, you know, I see them stand up in question period and say: "No, no. That's not happening." They're just saying that. Well, the reality is that physicians, doctors, and their families: those are businesses, and they are leaving. They are planning on leaving. All of these things matter. All of these things are important.

I look at one of the other things that we talked about that was really important in terms of postsecondary. Because of the cuts made to postsecondary education and the cuts made, let's say, to the University of Alberta, those things have really trickled down, and as a result, there are cuts made in a number of different places. One of those places is Campus Saint-Jean. It is the one place in Alberta and actually – I'm not a hundred per cent sure about this – I think in western Canada where students can go to receive their postsecondary education in French.

Now, because of the cuts that were made to the University of Alberta and all of the programs that operate underneath, they've lost 44 per cent of their course offerings. That's not good. That is not good. In one year. That is alarming. I think a lot of companies, when they look at Alberta – I think it was kind of a beacon, a bit of a shining beacon that there was this one place in the west where people could go that are perhaps bilingual, want their kids to go through bilingual school or immersion and then be able to have the choice to go to postsecondary in French. Now as a direct result of the cuts made to postsecondary, you know, that has been damaged significantly. So I think that is one thing.

Of course, health care, but other supports are important as well. I think that all of these things are taken into account when companies make decisions to invest. We know that families look at education. Obviously, they look at health care, but they look at other things like child care. I think we discussed at length both in question period and during other debates about the lack of investment in child care. That is one thing that is incredibly important.

The other thing is that who makes up these companies are, obviously, families but are women. I think that as a woman if I were to look at moving – and I certainly haven't looked at moving, but if I were to look at moving, one of the things I would look at in a city or a province is their work around diversity and gender equity. I would suggest that this is not something that this particular government has taken very seriously.

Sadly, I think we know that women here in Alberta earn something like 80 cents on the dollar for what a man earns in this province, and although it is probably higher than other jurisdictions, it's still pathetic, actually. It's pathetic that we earn 80 cents on the dollar. So going into one of my questions, one of the things in the bill, one of the things the government talks about is the creation of another board. I'm not going to really talk about the fact that we've created yet another board, another board that is – certainly, there are costs associated and all of that. But, you know, this is something that the government is choosing to invest in. That's fine. Let's debate it. Let's talk about it.

This board will be made up of seven members. It goes on to talk about the role of the director and all of the things that will be required of this particular board. Here's my question. Who will make up this board? Obviously, that's not listed in here. It doesn't talk about the value of diversity or the need to ensure diversity of this board. If this board is indeed going to set the path in terms of, "How do we attract business and investment into Alberta?" well, I think if we want to do that properly, then we absolutely need to look at board diversity. Good governance happens when there is diversity.

I don't know about you, Madam Speaker; I've been on lots of boards in my life. Certainly, the boards that I've been on where everybody is sort of on the same page, the same background, the same vision, those go fairly smoothly, but you don't really tend to think outside the box very much. You tend to just get the work done. Your meetings don't go over too much, which is great, but you don't really get to push the limits of what you're tasked to do. Good governance and really getting some incredible work done, where you can think outside the box and you can push limits, happens when you have diversity. That means diversity of age, diversity of ethnicity, diversity of gender, diversity of religion, diversity of philosophies even.

5:10

You know, I think that – oh, my gosh. I'll probably say her name – well, I'm not even going to say her name because I think that she gets attacked enough. But I think when we were in government, as we were looking at the climate leadership – and I'm not even going

to get into who suggested who should be on that panel. In any event, it is important to bring people together that have different points of view to get somewhere. It absolutely is. It is vitally important. Let's say, magically, that if I were tasked with putting together a panel that looked at attracting investment, looking at the future of Alberta, it would be ridiculous for me only to include people that believed the same things that I believe because I know that Alberta is a diverse province and that not everybody believes the same things I do. However, I would want to ensure that there were some benchmarks so that we had differences of opinion, we had differences of experience and background so we could collectively tackle problems by looking at every single angle. That makes us stronger.

I would suggest – although the bill doesn't have a ton of detail, it doesn't really let us know sort of what is the overriding goal of this particular board. Is it going to be another one – because I think we've seen some examples recently of some of the panels or councils that have been put together. I'm certainly not commenting on the experience or background of any person but just looking at it through the lens of a female, which I am. I look at the economic recovery council. It looks like some people with a ton of business experience, lots of different experiences in different areas. There are 12 members, but only two are women, I believe. Two out of 12. That does not reflect the diversity of this province. It just doesn't. This isn't about merit at all. This is about balance. Women in this province make up at least 50 per cent of the population, and we should be participating in all decisions that go forward that talk about economic recovery and investment, but that is not the case.

I look at another one that was very tasked, and I would have thought, because I think this particular field is heavily populated by women – even the Premier's charity council, which was tasked with giving out millions and millions of dollars during COVID and continuing, I'm assuming: 15 members; only five are women. I know there are more than five women out there that could do that job, absolutely. I know in that particular sector that absolutely there are more than five women.

The reason I'm bringing this up is that I am certainly not commenting on the skill or expertise of the people that are on these panels. What I'm saying is that if you go into a process knowing that if you have balance and if you have diversity and you cover all of the bases, then you are going to get further than you ever thought possible. I believe that. It's a lot more uncomfortable because not everybody is going to agree with you or agree with how you get there, but I think that's the way you do it. I keep saying that, just like in this place, it is my sincere hope that someday all of the seats in this Chamber are – you know, that we have the diversity that is our province, whether it's our background, our religion, our gender, whatever it is, that we reflect the diversity of our province. I think at the very least that this government will look at this opportunity for a new board like this, which is brand new, to use the opportunity to create that diversity, to set a new path, to set a new tone.

I would also hope that on this board – now, I know that not everybody opposite is I don't want to say a climate change denier but maybe playing footsie with climate change denial. I think it's really important to include all positions on a board like this. Absolutely, climate change is one of those things. Now, I know y'all are going to talk about: oh, my God; did the climate leadership panel have an environmentalist? Whatever. That's irrelevant. This is about a board going forward, looking at attracting investment to Alberta. We already know that Alberta has suffered some damaging withdrawals of investment. Do I think it's fair what happened? No, I actually don't. I think that one of the largest investment funds decided to exclude four Canadian oil sands producers from consideration. Do I think that's a bit hypocritical, considering

where the fund came from? Yup, I do. I actually do. I think, though, that it is reflective of a shift in global attitudes, and I think that for us to continue to get the best price for our resource, which we must do, we also have to look at the other realities, the other global realities and the other national realities. By doing that, by creating a board that is diverse, that reflects the diversity of ideas, we're just further ahead.

I would like to go back and say a couple of other things about why I think it's important to have diversity on the board that is talked about in Bill 33. Sure, I talked about, you know, science, bringing in science, research, development, not just the same experts, not just the ones that are party faithful or donors but to bring in different ideas because I think really cool things happen then.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to really thank the Member for St. Albert for talking about the importance of board diversity. Listening to her comments about the importance of ensuring that so many Albertans have so much to contribute despite their views, I think it truly makes sense when you hear her talk about the importance of having different views on that board. When we're looking at ways that we can draw investment into Alberta and attract it, as the act is called, we need to consider those things.

I mean, when we look at having diverse voices on that board, there are so many benefits to having that alternative look around the table. When we have a group of people that come together, there's definitely concern about: who's around that table, what does that board look like, and who does it represent? I think that hearing her comments really, really resonated because it's important to look at things from a different perspective.

The way that this has been going under this government with their economic recovery plan hasn't been effective. Even pre-COVID they lost 50,000 jobs because they were supporting their \$4.7 billion handout. I think that having an open mind, looking at ensuring that there are different voices such as those that believe in the science of climate change is something that absolutely should be a part of this diverse board. Talking about women being included in that conversation – right? – there's a different perspective that women bring to this when it comes to our economy and the impact.

I think, you know, that hearing about the importance of our gem that's right here in Edmonton, the French-speaking section of the University of Alberta, is huge. I mean, this member has worked so hard within the community of French-speaking Albertans, and just knowing that that is something that's drawn people to the province, somewhere that they can go learn, perhaps, in their first language, if it's French, is huge. Hearing about the cuts that have now been impacted because of this government's decision to cut postsecondary is important. I really appreciate the member's advocacy, and bringing that all together is so important.

So if there's anything else that you would like to talk about relating to what you were previously saying, I think I would really, really like to hear that.

Thank you.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. I agree. I think that homogeneous boards can breed ignorance and groupthink. I think that's just a fact. We know this, right? It leads to bad decisions. I think that when we all agree and nobody challenges anybody, you just don't make the best decisions. That

includes decisions at the highest levels of government, whether it's, you know, a board or a panel or whatever it is. I think that if you can find a way to arrive at a consensus or to arrive at a decision or a path that at least everybody is comfortable with, you can assume that you have reached out to more people than just your base. I think and I would hope that that would be the goal of the government of Alberta, to truly represent all of the people, not just the ones who are your party faithful and not just the ones that are your donors.

5:20

I would love to hear more as we get going in debate on Bill 33 about, you know, what is planned, what this board will look like. I mean, there are certainly points that they're tasked with doing, but I would like to know how they will approach the enormous problems. That begins with: who are the people that you are going to install? It does all begin with people.

You know, I might add that it is important, the reputation that a province has. I was born and brought up in Quebec, and at the time my pretty conservative family thought the Premier at the time here was incredible. It was Lougheed. They would, you know, talk a lot about what was going on in the diversification or the heritage savings, all of these things. We were looking to leave because Quebec was – well, for other reasons, but one of them being that there was talk of separatism. An actually French family, but still the prospect of separatism and all of the things that would come with it was enough to drive people to look at moving or to look at leaving. So I would suggest, you know, that it's not just about playing footsie, Madam Speaker; it's also about understanding the damage that you're doing overall within a country.

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to speak to second reading of Bill 33? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 33, the Alberta Investment Attraction Act. Certainly, I mean, this act is creating a corporation that is meant to create an investment strategy here in our province. I mean, of course, as other colleagues of mine have indicated, certainly we here in the NDP want to very much encourage investment in Alberta and are committed to that and making sure that Albertans have a robust business environment.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

It struck me, though. It's always interesting when you've been in this House for a period of time. Since I've been elected a second time, I still remember some of the stuff from the first time I was elected. I know that there are some members in here who haven't had – this is their first time being elected. Of course, you know, things are different. The UCP are now government; we're in the opposition, whereas before it was the reverse.

When our government wanted to make investment in Alberta a priority, we created the ministry of economic development and trade. We were, you know, taking major steps forward to support investment in Alberta. And when we did that, the opposition, who are the government now, just their running joke, I guess, was that, "Oh, well, at least you've created one job," which, of course, was the minister's job, who is our current House leader. That just went on for – I don't know – the whole time we were government. They just made this joke about that. Yet – yet – Mr. Speaker, when the UCP became government, they didn't get rid of that ministry. They seemed to be emboldened, actually, by that. They have a minister, and they didn't change what we had done, so despite their ridicule

it seems like now perhaps they're endorsing an NDP development of a ministry that supports investment.

They're even going further because they want to create this corporation now that will be arm's-length. They've described this. I was looking at their website, and they call it arm's-length. So even going further. I guess they're, you know, creating a few more jobs, then, if we want to have the same joke go forward, but it confuses me a bit because it is certainly incongruent, not fitting with what they seemed to espouse not too long ago. That concerns me a bit. I just wonder about the integrity of the leadership in government because of that. Are they just saying whatever they can to attack something instead of seeing, actually, the good qualities that were very evident in that ministry? And I think action perhaps speaks stronger than words in that they have kept that ministry and now, in fact, want to augment it by creating this corporation.

I think that this is an important point to make and to show that, you know, on this side of the House we worked very hard to encourage investment in this province. I just wanted to let the members that are newly elected this time around know because they might not know that history, but I'm sure their colleagues who have been elected for a second time would be happy to confirm what I've just shared.

I just have another question also about this legislation in that one of the things that, you know, this government has done that our government didn't do was to create a ministry of red tape reduction. This ministry has a mandate, as I understand it, to make sure that superfluous programs aren't created, making sure that there is a lot of efficiency in government, making sure that you're not bureaucratically heavy, and that kind of thing. This flies in the face of that. You're creating a whole other corporation. Often they say, "No, no, no; government shouldn't be doing this kind of stuff," yet here they have done something. I just wonder how that's going to be measured because I know that there have been reports come out of that ministry saying: oh, yes, well, we've cut this and we've cut that, but we have created this. It will be interesting how they measure this, and it's important for them to measure because I think it's going to create some more red tape for the government of the time.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, this is described as an arm's-length corporation. This is another question for the minister that I'm super confused about. You know, what is "arm's-length"? To me a definition of "arm's-length" is that it's sort of independent, and there's equal footing by the parties involved so that the government can't reach its hand in and muck around, right? An arm's-length corporation, even if created by the government, would not allow that kind of thing. I'm confused by that because right in section 12 of the bill it says:

The Minister may issue directives that must be followed by the Corporation or the board.

That doesn't sound very arm's-length to me. It sounds like this minister is going to be directly giving, well, directives to tell them what to do.

It says that she

may issue directives that must be followed by the Corporation or the board, or both, in carrying out their powers and duties under this Act and the regulations.

It says:

the board shall ensure that any directive issued to or required to be followed by the board, and the Corporation shall ensure that any directive issued.

There's a typo in here, actually. There's a double saying. I just noticed that as I'm reading it out loud. This directive must be implemented in a prompt and efficient manner.

Well, I don't know. That doesn't sound like it's arm's-length, so I'd love to hear from the minister to hear what she means by "arm's-length" because that seems like a lot of government control.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I guess I do have some reservations about some of what's gone on in, really, a relatively short time that this UCP government has been in power because there have been many challenges that we've seen in how things have been managed. I feel concerned that we don't want to repeat that in this area. You know, again, I just want to make sure that there is some sincerity on the part of the government, on the part of the minister to actually be transparent, be fair, help us understand what she means by "arm's-length" because what I read in this legislation sounds like that's not arm's-length at all. It's a directive that she can just go ahead and tell them what to do. You know, it flies in the face of any kind of independence.

5:30

I mean, I'm concerned that the government – and we've seen that they have certainly, you know, given themselves some extraordinary powers as a government. Certainly, some of it was necessary because of COVID-19, but they went so far as to write legislation where ministers can actually write their own legislation and not even bring it to the House. Call me cynical, but I'm concerned that the minister is giving herself too much power by this legislation. I think there needs to be much more accountability. I know that's a value of the UCP, or at least it's something that they talk about. If that is indeed true, then why are sections 12 and 13 saying what it is in the legislation?

I mean, there are other challenges of this government that are, you know, very fresh for us to point to to show some concerns. I mean, one of them is AIMCo, the \$2.1 billion loss. One of the concerns about that is that both the Premier and the Minister of Finance said this, that everything is fine, that AIMCo is fine, it's a well-run operation, it's just because of COVID-19 in this extraordinary time. Well, I'll give you that. I'll give you that, absolutely, it is an extraordinary time. It is a time when the volatility in the markets – it's been a very difficult time in our economy. I agree with that.

But I don't agree with the second part, and I don't agree that both the Finance minister and the Premier continue to say the same thing, that AIMCo is well run. We know that because we just saw the KPMG report, that came out at the end of June, that said that they need a culture change there. The risk was extraordinary, and actually the program, this VOLTS program that they had, where they lost the \$2.1 billion, is actually being disbanded completely. People have been fired from that agency. Organizational and operational changes have been made. This is all clear in this KPMG report. So it confuses me, why the Premier and the Minister of Finance would continue to say that AIMCo is, you know, managing this money very well.

What I'm concerned about is that this is going to happen again with this new corporation that they are creating through this bill, and we really won't have integrity from this government, and they won't be actually telling us what's really going on but, you know, sort of denying it. Now we know through this independent report that, absolutely, there was poor management in those decisions. This is just an example of why I question this government about this legislation, because there are other examples of times when the government is not being transparent, not being accountable.

I mean, you know, I can't resist. It seems like sort of a bit of old news because it's so chronically poorly managed. The energy war room is really a laughingstock of this government. They look so

foolish in this, yet they're saying, "Oh, we're going to create this other corporation," and we're just supposed to buy this lock, stock, and barrel, like we're supposed to trust them. Yet we know that there have been so many ridiculous things that have happened with that agency. First of all, the appointment of the CEO: it's not someone who has, necessarily, a communications background, who is an expert at debunking myths about the oil and gas sector. It's a fellow who lost to our Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Of course, it was a partisan appointment.

I guess, to the minister: I ask her if this is going to be the same kind of thing with this corporation, just more partisan political appointments. I hope that that's not true, and I'd like to make sure that, you know, someone who is appointed to this position legitimately has the skills, the education, the training to be able to manage this and that it isn't just some partisan appointment.

Besides, of course, the partisan appointment of Tom Olsen, you know, some of the craziness coming out of that energy war room: we found out early on that the logo was plagiarized. I mean, that was a significant embarrassment to this government. Many, many missteps on social media, so many so that – you know, it's rare for a Conservative to apologize, but Tom Olsen apologized. It was such a big fiasco regarding that. There are other issues here. Certainly, it's questionable whether this agency even needs to be in existence in our province, and certainly the way it's being run, the way it's been managed so far is an embarrassment.

Will this new creation of this corporation be something like that? You know, the government has some pretty devastating track records in these areas, so we want to make sure – and I hope the minister is really thinking about this, that you want an investment corporation that has integrity, that the person in that leadership position is someone who's qualified and is going to have the right skills and talents to be able to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have so many things that I want to comment on, so I'm going to try and get this all in.

First of all, to speak to integrity of leadership, I find it's a very interesting conversation, good conversation, but I wanted to talk about how the member was speaking about the energy portfolio. I think that where the laughingstock regarding the energy portfolio was was in the NDP handling of that. If we can consider what happened, the policies, the absolute devastation of our industry because of policies that came from that government, I really believe that they don't have a leg to stand on and still have not apologized to Albertans for the absolute ridiculous policy that came forward from them: caps on the oil sands, on the electricity portfolio, on the – [interjection] yes; thank you – PPD, on the horrible smoke and mirrors that were hiding dollars for the regular taxpayer to not know how they were going to be paying for electricity in this province because they decided to subsidize wind and solar, which are actually now, in the free market, doing a lot better than they did under their subsidized program, I might add. It's a very interesting thing.

The other thing that's interesting, too, is, you know, debunking myths of energy. Do you know what we have to debunk? What they did to this province. We have to debunk every single policy decision that was made in order to elevate the culture of energy in this province and in this country because the NDP, when they were in government, used energy policy as a way to promote social licence to supposedly build pipelines on the backs of Albertans and all of

the things that we stand for as a culture and in this province, not to mention the billions of dollars that have gone to other provinces supporting their programs as a result of the hard work of the people in this province, something that they never quite understood, and were willing to sacrifice every single person in this province for their social licence.

Well, let me remind the members across the way that social licence is actually an inherent part of any building of any infrastructure across the country, no matter what. Every person along every corridor has to be spoken to, talked to, talked to about dust particulates, anything, environmental pieces. [interjections] They're quite upset with me because they cannot forget that the reason that they're sitting there is because they threw Albertans under the bus because of their inability to run the energy portfolio. No stops there.

I'd also like to talk about the integrity of leadership. You know, it's interesting. When you're attracting business – I want to thank, actually, our incredible, strong, woman Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, who not only represents exactly what we want to see happening in this province but, on top that, is actively trying to attract business here.

Now, I want to bring a few very, very important pieces to light here. For every 100 men that are entrepreneurs in this province, we have 84 women. Did you know that the national average is 63? Tells you a lot about this province. Guess what? That's without government intervention. That's because we have savvy, amazing women here who know how to start businesses and actually have a minister that understands how to do that and actually create an environment for women to start business here.

But what's really interesting is: how is it that we convince strong, competent, capitalist-oriented women who want to start businesses here when we have former ministers over there dancing on the graves of former capitalist politicians, women such as Margaret Thatcher? It's a little unnerving for any capitalist woman, I think, who expresses her desire to create a business, be an entrepreneur, create jobs for people, make money, heaven forbid, off the profit of that business because when members over there, especially the women on that side, don't stand up for all women when one of their members actively says, and I quote, that he wishes that she died 30 years earlier . . .

5:40

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Point of Order Accepting an Apology

Mr. Bilous: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). Madam Speaker, earlier today you ruled that a member who retracts and apologizes: their comments in the House cannot be used as the minister just did regarding the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I request, in the essence of continuity and fairness, that if a comment made by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora in quoting a member, the Member for Red Deer-South, was ruled – in fact, she lost her speaking time because she was quoting the member, of which the Deputy Government House Leader had said that he had apologized and withdrawn that comment, that it was dealt with. This is the exact same situation. The minister is using a quote or words that were withdrawn from this Assembly and attributing them to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, so I'm hoping that you will make the same ruling that you did two hours ago.

Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Well, Madam Speaker, I'd be okay if you made the same ruling as you did a few hours ago, but it wouldn't be quite

what we just heard described. I think that when I made the point of order, it was because something was apologized for and withdrawn. At that point, you didn't declare it a point of order, which I would have preferred, but the Speaker is always right. I acknowledge that. You actually at least took away the member's speaking time when the member did the same thing you warned the member not to three, four times in a row. So if you were to be consistent, as my colleague here would ask, you would mention that to the member and tell her not to do it again and let her continue with her speech, and that would be consistent with what was ruled earlier today.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, as I have just had confirmed, there has not – perhaps the Speaker needs a minute to confirm some facts before moving forward. Actually, before I confirm something, I am actually prepared to rule on this point of order. While I do not find a point of order, I will, in the same manner in which the previous point of order was called and ruled upon two hours ago, caution the member on comments, moving forward, which could create disorder.

Proceed with the remainder of your time, which is 59 seconds.

Debate Continued

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for that, Madam Speaker. As I was suggesting, it's a strange way to attract women into business when there is obvious misogyny coming from the opposite members and the inability to actually be able to stand up in the face of that misogyny to make sure that we have the environment appropriate here for the incredible women that we're actually trying to attract to this province.

Again, in the last few seconds that I have here, I have to highlight that our Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has done a phenomenal job just by her mere presence and the way that she's able to work with the sector with her ability to be able to listen to the sector and find out what's better, not to mention the fact, I'd also like to say, that she actually was able to do the film tax credit, that was never done by the NDP in four years. She was able to do that within, I think – what was it, Minister? – the first, like, six or eight months of her having this in her ministry.

I would like to again suggest that if we're actually going to talk about how we're attracting investment, let's actually do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate on second reading of Bill 33? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and add my comments to the debate on Bill 33, Alberta Investment Attraction Act. Let me say that we do actually support the idea of attracting investment to Alberta, specifically at this point in time, when Alberta is going through a very tough time and a number of people are expecting to show leadership. We are open to any discussion that would help get investment to Alberta that creates jobs for the people of Alberta.

Anyway, looking through, going through the bill, as I said, even being pretty much supportive to the discussion that we are having in the House, I do have some questions where I feel that more clarity needs to be provided before we really come to a conclusion on how much we want to support this bill. This issue, this clarity is also very important for us given that we have one full year of history of this government and working in this House as an opposition, and we have seen that the things being done – the discussions at hand and plans being created and the laws being created – really didn't work the way they were initially mandated or, you know, claimed by the UCP government in this House.

Having said that, we have seen, earlier last year, one of the very first bills the government wanted to, in a way, deliver their election plan was to . . .

Member Irwin: Do you need more water, or are you okay?

Mr. Deol: I think I need water.

Member Irwin: Okay. I'll get water.

Mr. Deol: Thank you. I didn't really expect this to happen.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have seen that the bill was here in the House. Like, we opposed that bill. The government was so passionate, so confident about it. By reducing the corporate tax for large corporations, where that amounted to \$4.7 billion, something that was also actually published – I believe it was in the fiscal plan or the estimates. The government actually was very hopeful and claimed that that will bring the investments to Alberta, that will help, you know, to address the issue of rising unemployment in Alberta, create jobs and put Albertan workers back to work. In fact, even the government claimed that will provide them various high-paid jobs.

5:50

What has happened since then? We have seen companies like Husky Energy, EnCana, and a number of other companies – the companies' amount of benefit of those tax reductions in the very first year was in the hundreds of millions of dollars. If I recall, it was Husky Energy that was with a credit of around 230-plus million dollars but then handed layoffs to about 700 or 800 workers. So that didn't help. Not only that; after that step, they also announced their next projects in another part of the country. Also, some of the projects they announced were in the U.S. Similarly, EnCana benefited approximately, if I'm not wrong remembering something off the top of my head, nearly \$54 million and totally wrapped up their project in Alberta and eventually moved to the U.S.

That was the outcome we saw right after this law was established, and then the long-term effect – I would say that since that plan was, you know, established, all the way to the end of December or January, just before COVID, we have seen that Alberta, instead of creating jobs, was actually losing jobs. The job loss was nearly 50,000 in Alberta when, in fact, the plan that the government brought in was to create 52,000 jobs or 55,000 jobs in Alberta. The reason why we are concerned about this legislation, the reason why we have questions on this piece of legislation is that it's very important given the fact that what we have done in the last year did not deliver the promise, and our GDP seems contracted to about .6 per cent, and jobs have been lost.

What I would think – if we were the wise government, I would say, like: all House members are here representing different ridings and representing any political stripe, and we have a job to do. I think we are all concerned about the economy of Alberta and the jobs and about Albertans. At this point in time, almost a year after creating that plan, this would have been actually a very wise opportunity for us to sit together and review what went wrong in that whole past year, why this very plan that gave those rich, rich, large corporations, multicorporations, huge economic and financial benefits, but it did not trickle down to everyday Albertans. Instead, we've seen that government has made announcements within the past days that they are going to expedite that plan. Now, they will

reduce the corporate tax from 12 per cent to 8 per cent almost a year and a half sooner than they originally had planned for.

When these kinds of movements, these kinds of actions and things are happening, definitely there are concerns in the bill itself, in the way that it has been published, related to how this corporation is going to be created. What is in the view of this corporation and then the relationship of the ministry to the corporation? All those questions. But, similarly, when the government took a big step of giving nearly \$5 billion from everyday Albertan taxpayers, I would say, to the rich corporations, it did not deliver any results, and those Albertans, you know, ended up being paid for those kinds of values with cuts to their education, having seen the teachers being lost in schools. The doctors are fighting in the province, and the AMA is suing the government.

It was not long ago I was having a meeting with ACFA. That is the organization running the Campus Saint-Jean. You know, so painfully they discussed their concerns, the cuts to higher education, forcing that campus almost to lose nearly 42 per cent of the curriculum or, I would say, the courses that were being taught in that institution. In one way, we are not really promoting our talent. We are not supporting diversity, and we are not helping in our education system.

We are fighting with nurses. We are on the verge of losing nurses from hospitals, from the public health sector. When we had the experience within this very different, unprecedented situation that the world is going through, all the health care workers, the front-line workers stood up, put their lives and not only their lives but their families' lives at risk to be a safety guard for all of us, for all Albertans. Those very people: instead of being rewarded for their work that they have been doing, right now they are in a fight with the government.

When we are deciding, taking these big issues, big decisions – I would say that the debt is higher than before. It's almost \$1 billion more debt than when the UCP took office. It has put nearly, I would say, \$10 billion in the Alberta budget, the public-sector burden. We don't see the result that is benefiting everyday Albertans.

When we are discussing this Investment Attraction Act, I do also have questions, how this corporation they're going to create – when my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview talked about the status of their corporation, the way it's being explained, that's going to be very much independent itself, like when we're talking about arm's-length corporations.

Then I see section 11, where it states that it will be directly, you know, reporting to the minister. The minister will be issuing all of the directions. How it is an arm's-length corporation, and how you will see that its work will not be really intervened by the government's ideology or the office of the ministry: those are some of the questions.

Then in section 2 it says:

- (a) a high-value investment is an investment that is reasonably expected to perform better relative to other investments in the economic sector that the investment relates to, and
- (b) a high-impact . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock now strikes 6 p.m. The House will be adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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