



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, July 20, 2020

Day 47

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

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

Second Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
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Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
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Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
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Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard  
Eggen  
Glasgo  
Jones  
Loyola  
Nielsen  
Singh

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Horner

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

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Ganley  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
Walker  
Williams

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Reid  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

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

Chair: Mr. Milliken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Rosin

Ganley  
Gray  
Hoffman  
Long  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Shepherd  
Turton

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, July 20, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

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

**Ms Elhard:**

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

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, please be seated.  
Thank you, Brooklyn.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are a number of guests joining us in the galleries this afternoon: first, the guests of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, Jesse Drwiega and Kyle Shanebeck; secondly, the guest of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Barbara Marocco. Barbara gave the minister his very first job upon immigrating to Alberta. I had the chance to have a bit of a chat with her earlier today. She's been a loyal public servant for 39 years. I invite you all to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

### Provincial Parks Policies

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This beautiful weekend, on Parks Day, the members opposite were glued to their phones promoting a campaign related to Alberta Parks. The opposition claims that the government is selling off park sites around the province despite the fact that their leader acknowledged just last week that this is not true. The campaign centres around some of the province's wild animals, who are imploring, "Don't go breaking [our] parks," and features an image the NDP listed as a wolf. I understand that props are not allowed in the Chamber, but I really wish I could show you this image. I'm no wildlife expert, but it's clearly a coyote.

Now, I understand that members of the Official Opposition don't take much time from their packed schedule of griping on Twitter to get out of the Leg. and into nature, but come on. Most Albertans

know the difference between a wolf and a coyote. To add insult to injury for this poor canine, the image, which is presumably copyrighted, was lifted from a 2020 article from the *Ottawa Citizen* about – you guessed it – urban coyotes. It's time for a canine behaviour and anatomy lesson, Mr. Speaker. Wolves are usually more than twice the size of coyotes. Did you know that they have rounded ears whereas coyotes have prick ears? They also leave considerably larger tracks and are much more reserved around humans than coyotes.

But, Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time the NDP has cried wolf. They've accused us of blowing up hospitals, opposing democracy while at the same time tabling legislation to allow a direct vote in matters that Albertans are important – finally, they went so far as to suggest that a Nigerian-born Minister of Municipal Affairs is a white supremacist.

Mr. Speaker, we know that no one's perfect. In fact, we all make mistakes, but the opposition's rabid attempt to spread fear among Albertans is not a good look. Alberta's government is leveraging site partnerships like the one the NDP formed with the town of Sylvan Lake and transferring a small number of facilities to public lands. These will all remain protected and accessible to Albertans. But I'm not holding my breath that the NDP will dial down the rhetoric any time soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has a statement to make.

### Queen's Golden Jubilee Award Recipient

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Queen's jubilee award awards outstanding young Albertans who demonstrate leadership and community service and talent in performing and visual arts. While in past years it has been a moment of great celebration for those who have achieved this high honour, this year the government decided to trample on the very thing that enables these young artists to flourish, their freedom of expression.

Prior to his award Jesse Drwiega received a call from the minister of culture's staff informing him that his speech was, quote, problematic, end quote. Fast-forward to the ceremony. The minister's office, without informing Jesse beforehand, had pulled his entire speech from airing and going public. They also refused to meet with him after the event like they had promised. Jesse, who joins us here in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, had this to say, quote: it saddens me that the government has and continues to cut funding to the arts and education in Alberta, the Speaker even saying that the arts simply aren't in our mandate; however, I am grateful to the 25th Assembly, which established this award recognizing that the performing arts are an invaluable facet of the diversity of cultures and people in Canada; but I am only one student; there are many more young people who need access to quality arts education in Alberta. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of expression is a cornerstone of our democracy and the right upon which all other Charter rights are founded. The minister's attempt to silence Alberta artists into complacency is not going to go unnoticed or unchallenged. The arts are a crucial part of our rich history and culture of Alberta, and with students like Jesse leading the charge and holding the government to account, the arts in Alberta will continue to thrive.

Thank you.

### Postsecondary Education Funding for Lethbridge

**Mr. Neudorf:** Mr. Speaker, the future of Alberta's economy is bright. We have the hardest working, most entrepreneurial, and

youngest workforce in the country. As we move forward this year, we as government must look toward the diversification of our economy. Tax credits, encouraging investments, and building pipelines have moved us in the right direction. We are getting Albertans back to work.

But now we must address how we're going to keep Albertans looking to a better future. We must build up our postsecondary institutions, and I have been working tirelessly to make sure that Albertans have the skills and the institutions they need for the future. Our government is implementing our skills for jobs initiative, which will ensure that we are prepared for that future, with young Albertans learning the skills to meet the demand for the sectors and industries that are growing the fastest.

That is why I was very pleased to see the Minister of Advanced Education announce investments of over \$23 million in Lethbridge postsecondaries. These investments, long overdue, will ensure that Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge will have the facilities and upgrades they need to teach our future leaders. Not only is it about funding key infrastructure and maintenance projects; it is about working with the administrations for these institutions to develop a stable, predictable, and sustainable funding framework. I would like to thank the university and the college in Lethbridge for working so hard in co-operation with not only myself but with the ministers of Advanced Education and Finance in making this happen. These are great institutions and are not only leaders in the province but in the country.

Albertans for generations to come will benefit from the recent commitments of our government. The Minister of Advanced Education's concise vision, his open-door policy, consultation with his colleagues and the communities they represent are ensuring that Lethbridge and all of Alberta will have the tools they need for the coming decades.

### Provincial Parks in Kananaskis Country

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, one of the best things about living in Calgary is the incredible access we have to camping, hiking, biking, and all sorts of outdoor activities, all this because we have Kananaskis right on our doorstep. I can't tell you how many times in the last few weeks Calgarians have stopped me in the street or reached out to me to tell me how important Kananaskis is to them. These people are friends, neighbours, even strangers. Many young professionals tell me that they chose to move here and start their business or chose a job here because of that access. Others, like me, grew up going to Kananaskis and want their kids to grow up going there, too.

**1:40**

That's something I fear might not be possible because of this UCP government. The government is devastating Alberta's parks, off-loading 184 parks around Alberta, 1,400 campsites in Kananaskis alone. I don't know a single Albertan who voted for this government to deprive them of access to K Country. Kananaskis is part of the legacy Albertans will leave to future generations. It should be treasured and maintained, not stripped for parts so that the government can pay for their handout to profitable corporations. This is the opposite of a job-creation move. How many companies or professionals came to Calgary because of the quality of life offered by our proximity to this amazing outdoor experience?

Our parks are essential to the Alberta spirit, to who we are. When this government puts our parks on the auction block, they are threatening the very soul of Alberta for a pittance in savings. It's not too late for this government to finally take out their earplugs

and start listening and do the right thing. I would urge all of my UCP colleagues to consider doing that.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

### Rural Crime Prevention

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm encouraged by the steps we are taking as a government to curb the issues on rural crime. The hiring of more police officers and a joint program with municipalities along with volunteer citizens will go a long way in helping our communities.

However, Mr. Speaker, with recent events being considered, these steps can't happen fast enough. For example, there was a high-speed chase in Calahoo where shots were fired at a local constituent who was following behind the truck that was stolen. Most recently we had an armed robbery take place in Parkland county where criminals came back multiple times and used gunmen to prevent homeowners from pursuing them while on the phone with 911. This is happening right in my backyard.

I believe that there are further steps that could be taken to tackle this issue. New technology and ways of doing things are available, largely from what was traditionally a military-only application. We have great local companies here in Alberta that utilize drones for photo capture and video surveillance. Some have already teamed up with well-known pipeline companies for the purpose of right-of-way patrol, ensuring that the pipelines are safe. I don't believe that it'd be too much of a stretch to have companies such as these tied into our plan to tackle rural crime. While the drones are monitoring things like the pipelines, if a call comes in for emergency services about a break-in or something of the like, we temporarily reroute that drone over to investigate. This live feed would provide the ability to follow criminals without citizens risking their lives to try to protect their family and property. Additionally, that drone can act as a communications tower for multiple law enforcement and EMS to communicate with each other, something on a common frequency, which currently is a challenge.

I look forward to having these discussions with the Minister of Justice on how this can be accomplished and developing a plan to confront rural crime head-on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Bill 32 Employment Standards Code Amendments

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the second time in this Legislature, Alberta workers are under attack from this UCP government. Bill 32 nickel and dimes workers and will not make life better for Albertans. While the minister states that legislative changes will not reduce pay, his own fact sheet tells a different story.

Alberta workers, let me break some of this down for you. Your holiday pay will no longer have to include vacation pay, so if you want to take a holiday and use a stat to extend that vacation by an extra day, your average wage will be cut in half for that day, 50 per cent less than you would have received a year ago.

Now, what about transitioning to a new job? You give your required notice. You leave your job at the end of July to start a new job at the beginning August, knowing that your new job won't pay you until at least two weeks after you start, likely closer to three. The job you just left: they don't have to pay you until the end of August, not your unused vacation, not your wages earned, nothing for 31 days. Bad news for students out there: your summer

employer won't have to pay you until the end of September. Hope you weren't planning on using that money for your textbooks.

What about averaging agreements? There are no agreements. The employer alone gets to decide what works best for them and only has to give you two weeks' notice to impose those changes on you. Averaged work schedules are nothing new. For seasonal workers, like oil workers, these are fairly normal. However, the new changes allow for averaging your hours for up to a year. They can keep you employed, not lay you off for spring for breakup, where you would be able to apply for EI, and average your yearly hours to reduce overtime payouts. Sure, you get a paycheck all year, but in the end the amount of money in your bank account is drastically reduced.

Mr. Speaker, these attacks on workers are wrong. Why is this government intent on taking billions of dollars from the pockets of workers to give it to the shareholders around the world? In the opposition we know this is wrong, and we will continue to fight against this second version of pick-your-pocket legislation for our constituents. Too bad government members won't do the same.

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

### Waterton Lakes National Park

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Located in the far southwest corner of Alberta is undoubtedly one of Canada's greatest gems: Waterton national park, the fourth national park in the country and the second in Alberta. Waterton and its American counterpart, Glacier national park, form the oldest transboundary protected area in the world. They are also a world heritage site, and this year Waterton celebrates its 125th anniversary of being declared a park.

Waterton boasts incredible vistas, the Prince of Wales Hotel, fantastic food, and a number of other attractions. Wonderful trails overlook views of the whole valley surrounding beautiful Waterton Lake.

The town and the park are also full of history, from the role of Kootenai Brown as the first settler in the park to the story of the building of the Prince of Wales Hotel to the very first oil well in western Canada.

In Waterton they often say that every day is Saturday. There is no slow day as visitors, often over half of those of American origin, fill the town. Over 500,000 visitors fill the park each year despite the park only being open during the summer months.

This year summer at Waterton looks very different for most businesses in the area as the usual stream of American tourists has dried up due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When I visited Waterton a couple of weeks ago, I spoke to business owners who are working hard to adapt to the realities of fewer visitors in the park.

One way that every Albertan can participate in the economic relaunch strategy is to use this summer to see their backyard rather than travelling internationally or even to other provinces. This summer I hope that Waterton and many other locations in Livingstone-Macleod are part of Albertans' summer plans. After all, we have many great attractions and lots of good parking.

### Blood Donation System

**Ms Hoffman:** In 2017 I brought forward the Voluntary Blood Donations Act because I wanted to support a strong Canadian blood supply for Canadians. The UCP wants to repeal that. It doesn't come as much of a surprise that the UCP wants to bring in an American-style blood donation system, just like they want to turn our public health care system into a corporate-driven, American-style, two-tiered system. The UCP tries to refute the fact that they are Americanizing our health care, but today they invited an

American-based professor to speak to the committee about an American-style corporate model for blood.

Pushing the sale of blood will do nothing to increase supply for Albertans. In fact, the private, for-profit donations in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are being shipped to Europe and are doing nothing to increase plasma in Canada. In fact, by donating to a private international company, it ensures that it will not stay in Canada and threatens the very security of our domestic supply chain.

The CEO of Canadian Blood Services told the committee today that he would not be neutral on this issue. He expressed concern that this bill will drive less control in Alberta in terms of our own blood supply. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, the sponsor of Bill 204, said that he had consulted and discussed this bill with Canadian Blood Services, but he didn't invite them to speak to the committee because he knows they don't support his bill.

I believe in CBS. I know they were created in response to the tainted blood scandal, and I want to see CBS succeed because I think it's important that we have a secure domestic supply. Clearly, the bill's sponsor and the UCP don't share that goal. Our party believes that a secure domestic supply for patients should be the focus. Canadian Blood Services believes that this threatens this outcome.

The bill still has a chance to be defeated in this House. The UCP has chosen to put the interests of corporations ahead of public health care so far, but I want to encourage all Albertans to reach out to the Health minister and to all MLAs to convince this Legislature that Bill 204 should be defeated and that CBS and our domestic supply are a priority.

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

### Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tri region is an area made up of the city of Spruce Grove, the town of Stony Plain, and Parkland county. The three collaborate on a number of initiatives ranging from tourism to housing initiatives to so much more. Recently the tri region took the lead on regional co-operation yet again by going through the process of forming an integrated regional chamber of commerce.

When the Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce was officially formed, it became the third-largest chamber of commerce in the province, following only Calgary and Edmonton. This further proves the positive effects of regional co-operation as the tri region will now have a robust voice that can attract investment to the region as a whole. This has been a long and difficult process for everyone involved in all three regions, but their efforts have been extremely successful.

Representing over 600 businesses, the greater Parkland regional chamber offers local businesses a wide array of services from education opportunities to professional advice and networking opportunities. The new chamber also ensures that the voices of business owners in my riding as well as across Parkland region are represented effectively at the provincial level. The larger chamber will be able to advocate for policies that constituents in my riding care about to the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.

The tri region has long been an example of the effectiveness of regional integration. It was a pleasure to be involved in it during my time as a city councillor in Spruce Grove, and I've enjoyed working with all members of the tri region since my election as an MLA. It's a pleasure to serve alongside such incredible leaders, and I look

forward to seeing this group play their important role in our economic relaunch moving forward.

Thank you.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Physician Retention

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we learned that the government is trying to prevent doctors from leaving Alberta while the Premier claimed that he only knows of one doctor leaving the province – just one. Now, maybe he's talking about Dr. Nelini Reddy, who wrote last week that the government was trying to “deny us . . . basic Charter rights and handcuff us in place. I have been oppressed. I will not be oppressed again. I cannot in good conscience and faith accept the changes the current Alberta government is enforcing.” Premier, is Dr. Reddy the only doctor leaving Alberta?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, apparently, according to the socialist party we're now oppressing physicians by paying them more than in any other province in the country, more than ever in Alberta history. In the second quarter of last year, under the tenure of the NDP, there were 10,599 physicians registered in Alberta. In the second quarter of this year, under the current government, there were 10,905 physicians registered, an increase of 306. That is an increase, not a decrease of physicians registered in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, Premier; you're oppressing their rights by ripping up their fundamental Charter rights.

Maybe the Premier was talking about Dr. Will White. He's the clinical medical director of adult in-patient psychiatry at the Foothills medical centre and a clinical professor at the University of Calgary. Dr. White tweeted out his acceptance of a new job in another province, and he dedicated it “to all the UCP Ministers and MLAs . . . who claim doctors leaving Alberta is an ‘empty threat.’ Adios.” Is Dr. White the only doctor who's leaving Alberta, Premier?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to inform the NDP, but the political preferences of the socialist party does not constitute a Charter right, nor is there a Charter right to an annual increase in compensation of 6 per cent. There is no Charter right to a 23 per cent increase in compensation for physicians over four years. There is certainly no Charter right to a future \$2 billion projected increase, a 40 per cent increase, if we don't bring physician compensation within the means of taxpayers. I'm also pleased to inform the member that we've seen a significant increase in the number of physicians who are billing Alberta Health.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a Charter right is breached when you tell people what job they must keep and whether they can or cannot move from one province to the other, and this Premier should know that.

Now, maybe the Premier was actually talking about: Dr. Heather Gooden, Dr. Beenish Rashid, Dr. Lindsey Campbell, Dr. Annelies Noordman; the list is endless. We know that half of Alberta's doctors are thinking of leaving. When will this Premier fire his failed minister and get back to the table? Or will he admit that

chasing doctors away is part of his plan to deprive Albertans of health care to pay for his \$4.7 billion handout?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in – I'll just take the month of February, pre-COVID. There were last year, under the previous NDP government, 9,377 physicians billing Alberta Health, and in February of this year, under a different government, 9,630 physicians billing Alberta Health. That's an increase of 253 physicians. Of course, every year, for a whole variety of reasons, physicians will come and go. But since this government took office, the number of physicians working within the Alberta health care system has increased, not decreased.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, you only threatened to not let them leave last week, so it's going to take a bit before you start to see those numbers.

#### Child Care

**Ms Notley:** Albertans were deeply disappointed when the Premier's so-called economic reopening plan failed to mention child care; hardly surprising, given that a new report shows that this UCP government's support for child care is the worst in Canada. Twenty per cent of operators reported that they may not reopen at all. Now, economists say that there can be no recovery without a serious plan for child care, but this government just isn't listening. Why is this Premier shackling half of Albertans when it comes to participating in any kind of economic recovery?

**Mr. Kenney:** Of course, the government is doing no such thing, Mr. Speaker. The government has worked very closely with child care providers to facilitate their reopening in compliance with the public health restrictions. What the NDP leader characterizes as shackling is actually the requirement for appropriate population or group sizes within the public health orders. I want to thank the Minister of Children's Services for working very closely with child care providers in this respect, and it's one of the reasons that we're determined to ensure the safe reopening of schools this September.

**Ms Notley:** Well, what I referred to as shackling is the fact that this government is the worst in the country in terms of supporting child care.

It's not just us raising this issue. Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem says that one of the main threats to Canada's recovery is a failure to reopen child care centres. RBC says that COVID-19 has knocked the women's workforce participation from historic highs to a 30-year low, and they say that “policies to address childcare will be crucial to keeping women engaged.” Operators, civil society, even bankers understand the need for child care. Why doesn't this Premier understand?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, we do, which is one of the reasons why Alberta reopened child care facilities more quickly than, I believe, any other province in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's why we provided direct financial support to private child care operators, and it's also why we have a plan to increase the number of positions that are available in the long term, in part by streamlining regulations that have limited the number of new child care centres in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the NDP leader's favourite words are, “Alberta is the worst.” She had an MLA the other day say that Alberta was the worst province in the country in which to be a



woman. Isn't that interesting? Hundreds of thousands of women have chosen Alberta as their new home in recent decades.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has funded child care the least, and they have the highest number of child care centres likely to close.

Now, the Yukon government is developing an affordable child care program, and the Premier there said that "the cost of childcare shouldn't be stopping Yukoners from going to work." Shrinking access to child care is preventing Albertans from returning to their jobs. Once again Albertans have to watch other Premiers get it right while this Premier doesn't get it at all. Why won't this Premier commit to supporting our constructive proposal for universal, \$25-a-day child care and help get all Albertans back to work?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, well, partly because the NDP has no such proposal. Boy, the NDP leader's memory is so short these days. She seems to have forgotten that she was Premier for four years and did not provide universal child care. That was a pilot program that created – how many thousands of spots? – a few thousand spots for a population of 4.4 million people.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to the House that Alberta's economic contraction, based on retail sales and credit card billings, was smaller than the other large provinces in part because we did reopen safely, prudently, and more quickly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question to ask.

#### School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** This weekend a letter from the Education minister to teachers was released publicly stating that school boards had funding already to deal with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. That's news to me, Mr. Speaker, and to thousands of Albertans who've reached out to me with their concerns about a safe reopening. We need new supports, we need more physical space, and we need more staff, not fewer. But all we're getting are cuts and talking points. To the minister: do you really want to go down in history as the minister who refused to protect students from COVID-19? That's the legacy that you're headed to.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is certainly going to go down in history as an opposition MLA who makes a lot of stuff up.

The truth is this. There are no funding cuts for the education system. The member, if she takes five minutes to research this, can see line by line that school boards across the province are receiving equal or increased funding this year versus last year, and the school boards collectively have hundreds of millions of dollars of... [interjection] Oh, the NDP leader is angry, and she's heckling again.

The school boards have hundreds of millions of dollars of reserves for rainy days. This is a rainy day, and we encourage them to use those funds.

**Ms Hoffman:** Governing is about choices, Mr. Speaker, and the UCP has chosen to hand over \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations instead of supporting a safe reopening for kids in kindergarten to grade 12. If the Premier spent five minutes reading his own budget, he'd see that they have less money in this year's budget than in the last NDP budget, with 30,000 more kids going to school, Premier. Shortchanging students is a very cold choice that's going to result in increased costs for parents this fall, and we know that many families are already struggling to make ends meet. To the Premier:

why are you asking parents and staff to carry the increased costs of back to school during a pandemic?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are determined to facilitate a safe reopening of the schools, working very closely with school boards, with trustees, with superintendents, with principals, and, of course, with parents to ensure the safe reopening. The Minister of Education will have more about that tomorrow. There's one thing we do know about the NDP, though. They always think that the solution to everything is to spend more, even though we have a \$20 billion plus deficit this year, and that it's incumbent upon them to tell us how to pay for more. Whose taxes do they want to raise and by how much?

**Ms Hoffman:** Four point seven billion dollars in corporate giveaways, Premier. We've told you that for over a year.

Here's a quote, Premier, from a teacher in Calgary. She teaches elementary school. She says: "I'm kind of horrified at the lack of response from the current government... I'm updating my will [in] August, I'm not even kidding," Premier. Staff and families are asking for funding to support increased cleaning and PPE, and this Premier decides that reopening schools is appropriate under his current budget. It's going to make schools less safe, period, and there is no economic recovery without safe reopening for schools and for child care. So, Premier, why won't you put the resources in place to ensure the safe reopening of schools?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education will be outlining a comprehensive plan for the safe reopening of Alberta schools this September based on extensive consultations. She'll be doing that tomorrow.

But allow me to respond to the huge whopper typically coming from the NDP: \$4.7 billion. Mr. Speaker, now, first of all, let's remind the NDP that they raised business taxes by 20 per cent, and revenues went down for four straight years as a result. Four point seven billion dollars: every credible economist in the province has said that that is complete rubbish, a total figment of their imagination. They're trying to gross up a four-year figure with no growth factor into one year to mislead people. It's shameful.

#### Economic Recovery and Women

**Member Irwin:** The numbers are in, and, wow, are they grim. Women are being left behind, and this government has done nothing to prevent that. According to Stats Canada men's employment is roughly 9 per cent lower than pre-COVID levels while women's employment levels are 12 per cent lower. On top of that, women lost 51 per cent of all the jobs in March and April but only gained 45 per cent of the jobs in May and June. Premier, when will your government realize that your economic recovery plan does nothing to address women, and when will you start addressing the roadblocks that are stopping women from participating in Alberta's economy?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the NDP is finally starting to figure out that there is an economic crisis of almost unprecedented scope in this province, the biggest global contraction in 90 years, a concomitant crash in energy prices for our largest industry sector, and it's affecting Albertans of both genders and people of all backgrounds, including Alberta women. That is why we have this bold and ambitious action plan, the Alberta recovery plan. I would remind the member opposite, however, that one of her bosses, Gil McGowan of the AFL, wanted us to shut down all of

those hospitality businesses, which many women depend on for employment, for months to come.

**Member Irwin:** Many women are not re-entering the workforce not because of the lack of job opportunities but because they're not able to participate. RBC has reported that women's participation in the workforce has dropped to 55 per cent, the lowest since 1985, and these numbers are particularly alarming for mothers with young children. Alexa Briggs told the *Calgary Herald* that juggling working from home and child care is mentally and physically exhausting, and she's not able to return to work. Premier, will you acknowledge that one of the biggest hurdles facing women is the lack of affordable, accessible child care, or are you content with women being pushed out of the workforce?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the member opposite of their record and what their pilot did. It exacerbated inequities in our child care system, which were made worse during this pandemic. They supported 4 per cent of child care centres across this province, 2 per cent of parents. What we do know is that right now only half of centres have reopened, and of those, occupancy is at 41 per cent. We're going to continue to invest dollars. In the last two budgets millions and millions of dollars, I believe around \$30 million, was reinvested to support low-income working parents, who really, truly need help getting back to work.

**Member Irwin:** That minister talks about getting women back to work, but it's not clear how women will get back to work. She says that her government is encouraging child care centres to work with parents, and she says: we're encouraging really common-sense things. But what's common sense to everyone, outside of this government, is the need to provide affordable, quality child care. Premier, will you finally address the burden that women are facing, start supporting their re-entry into the workforce, and reverse your decision to cancel \$25-a-day child care?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to present – not just once but twice, again in the last election, when Albertans voted against it, and a third time last week – a half-baked and uncosted plan for \$25-a-day child care that only supports a select few. They racked up debt, they picked winners and losers, they ignored small businesses, they ignored female entrepreneurs who run these centres, and they ignored preschools entirely. We won't take lessons from them. We will continue to support working parents who really, truly need our help getting back to work. That's targeted investments, reducing red tape so that parents can get back to work and centres can support them.

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

#### Medical Laboratory Equipment Grant

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've seen how integral our labs have been to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Alberta is a world leader, testing more per capita than any other jurisdiction in Canada. In fact, our labs in Alberta have been outperforming most jurisdictions in the world. However, there is a pressing need for new lab equipment and infrastructure not just in Edmonton but across northern Alberta. To the Minister of Health: what is being done to meet the demand for diagnostic tests?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the pandemic has clearly demonstrated, effective laboratory services play a critical

role in protecting public health. Today I was pleased to announce \$15 million to upgrade lab facilities in Edmonton and throughout northern Alberta. This grant is for medical lab diagnostic equipment such as centrifuges, microscopes, analyzers, other pieces of essential lab equipment. We're also committed to providing efficient and sustainable medical lab services, with advanced equipment and tech, to help meet the needs of Albertans into the future.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For more than 20 years now most publicly funded lab services in northern Alberta have been successfully provided by an independent contractor. Given that the NDP actually planned to shut down Edmonton's independent lab provider, with a \$50 million penalty to taxpayers, and given that they also wanted to spend upwards of \$200 million building government-run laundry services, ignoring the experts at AHS who concluded that independent providers were far less expensive, and given that there is still an urgent need for improved lab services, to the Minister of Health: will this grant provide enough funding to AHS to meet the needs for new and upgraded equipment to serve people in Edmonton and northern Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans rely on high-quality lab tests and results, which inform more than 70 per cent of our health care decisions; 75 million lab tests are performed every year in Alberta for 2.3 million Albertans. AHS will be installing new and upgraded lab equipment to help ensure that patients have access to the latest technologies. Because our government is committed to addressing the need for lab services in Edmonton, this grant to AHS is a significant step forward.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. As the previous NDP government was blinded by ideology and given that Albertans deserve much better patient results than they are currently receiving and given that the NDP speak of American-style health care, can the Minister of Health please explain: will this new equipment mean that patients have shorter wait times for CT scans or MRIs, since there is a huge demand for these types of diagnostic tests?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this funding will further strengthen our health system here in Alberta and ensure that people have access to top-quality health services. This is over and above the previously announced \$30 million to replace and upgrade medical equipment around the province. Now, not only will our large hospitals in Edmonton benefit from this investment but also facilities from Leduc to Boyle, from Grande Prairie to Bonnyville, and throughout northern Alberta. We know that there is a need in these areas, and we're going to meet those needs for Albertans.

#### Provincial Parks and Campgrounds

**Mr. Schmidt:** Kananaskis Country is an internationally regarded tourist destination that's part of our provincial heritage and provides so much space for recreation to both Albertans and to visitors. Apparently, members of the government caucus have never visited or experienced K Country as they're allowing the Premier and his environment minister to shut down, sell, or off-load 51 provincial recreation areas in K Country for commercial development. To the

minister: can you tell Albertans and tell the people hiking in K Country today why you believe erecting five-star hotels and condos in this pristine natural environment is necessary?

2:10

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Wow, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member has reached a new low. I'll just use the quote from his leader on Friday in a press conference about this issue. She said: no parks will be sold; that's true. Again, the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged on Friday that no parks would be sold, and this is just fearmongering yet again. The NDP continue to try to fund raise on this issue, manipulate what Albertans think. It's disappointing. Of course we treasure Kananaskis. It's a precious park that will continue to be protected under this government and will continue to be invested in by this government.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that there is no investment forthcoming and no protection forthcoming and given that when the constituents of Banff-Kananaskis moved to elect a UCP member to represent their interests, they likely didn't realize that she was going to stand behind a minister who's closing 1,400 campsites in K Country alone and given that those constituents have a right to know whether that member either doesn't care about preserving their campgrounds or doesn't have any sway, can the minister of environment tell the House whether any MLAs in his caucus have expressed concerns or tried to stop him with his plot to close hundreds of parks and thousands of campsites across the province?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the desperation is just unbelievable from the NDP, particularly from that hon. member. We are not shutting one campsite in this province. They are fully open and fully operating, and the Member for Banff-Kananaskis knows that, and so does the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the NDP, who said on Friday: no parks will be sold; that's true. That hon. member knows that but continues to fearmonger because that's the NDP, the politics of hate and smear and misleading Albertans. It's so disappointing. Albertans can rest assured that we'll continue to stand up for Kananaskis and make sure that Albertans can enjoy it for generations to come.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that those generations will be mining coal in Kananaskis instead of camping there and given that tens of thousands of Albertans have raised concerns about the UCP's plan to off-load 184 parks across the province and given that the push-back is growing as people come to realize just what it means to their favourite summertime getaways, for those Albertans seeking more information and who are bewildered why this government would destroy and sell off our parks, can the minister of environment list off who exactly he's consulted with on this terrible fire sale? If the answer is no one, will he at least back away from this ridiculous plan?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is never tired of being wrong. It's very disappointing to continue to see him and his party misrepresent facts inside this Chamber. The reality is that no parks are for sale. Certainly, no parks inside Kananaskis, one of our most treasured and protected areas inside this province, are for sale or will ever be for sale. The reality is that the parks that are inside Kananaskis already are protected from industrial development, including coal development, so it's very, very shocking to see the hon. member again come to the House and fearmonger and cause Albertans to be scared about their parks. But, rest assured, we've got it under control.

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

### Environmental Monitoring Consultations

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government didn't consult indigenous communities before suspending environmental monitoring and didn't consult the Northwest Territories' government. They have a legal obligation to do both. Who did they consult extensively? Groups like Suncor and CAPP according to the e-mails that surfaced in the media. To the minister: how come indigenous communities didn't have a voice on the suspension of environmental monitoring?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the government did not suspend environmental monitoring. Alberta Environment did put some postponements on environmental reporting, and, yes, we worked with the industry to be able to provide requirements that would help people that are working in the industry remain safe, just like we did in many other industries, including teachers and health care workers as well as with indigenous communities; for example, Fort McKay, who have asked for an extension on the Moose Lake planning process because of COVID. Of course, we're going to work together with all communities that are involved to be able to keep people safe during COVID. I'm proud that we did that at the same time as protecting the environment, because that's what we stand for.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the CEO of the AER wrote to impacted indigenous communities promising them a meeting to discuss their concerns about the abrupt suspension of environmental monitoring but given that it then took weeks for a meeting to be arranged, according to e-mails, and given that by then testing of our air and water quality had long been suspended, Minister, has the AER finally met with indigenous leaders after it broke the law when it suspended the environmental monitoring, and if so, what is being done now to address their concerns? Please be specific, and please pretend that you actually care about . . .

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, that's the angry NDP fearmongering and misleading the public. That's all they can do inside this Chamber. Yes, the Alberta Energy Regulator took some steps to protect employees, just like the government did. We would do that again, of course, if we have a situation where we need to protect people from COVID-19. Those are the facts. But we did continue to protect the environment. We will always continue to protect the environment. But that's, again, that hon. member just hiding from the fact that he oversaw an AER that's been found by the Privacy Commissioner and others to be corrupt. I will ask him, like I have all his colleagues: does he know where the missing \$2.3 million is?

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Minister of Energy clearly thinks that the duty to consult with indigenous communities is optional and given that the chief of Fort McKay First Nation stated that, quote, it shouldn't be onerous to forge a working relationship and given that the AER has already become a dumping ground for the Premier's buddies who can't find work elsewhere, to the minister. Climate change denier John Weissenberger gets a voice on environmental monitoring, but chiefs don't. Is that fair?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy has risen.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, like almost every single jurisdiction across North America, across the world, as a matter of fact, suspended requirements for environmental reporting. There was no suspension of environmental monitoring. It was done to protect safety, it was done because of COVID, and

it's not out of any ordinary practice of any jurisdiction across North America.

### Site Rehabilitation Program Applications

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, an important industry in my constituency is oil and gas. Recently the federal government provided grant money for the rehabilitation of inactive wells. I understand that the first phase of the site rehabilitation program is now complete. However, some of my constituents have voiced concerns regarding the length of time involved in receiving the information about potentially successful applications. To the Minister of Energy: could you please provide more information regarding the timelines involved in an application, some of the reasons that could cause a delay, and what we'll see different in the coming phases of the program?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The site rehabilitation program is a \$1 billion program, and we launched it within two weeks of receiving word from the federal government that the funding would be available. We saw a phenomenal response to the program, with over 36,000 applications for phase 1. Now, it's taken some time for my department to get through those applications, but we are now through them, and we've caught up on the backlog. We're now rolling out phase 3 of the site rehabilitation program, which is a straightforward and more targeted round that will allocate certain funds to each and every site operator, well licensee in Alberta.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, given that all businesses but specifically hydrocarbon-based businesses work off demanding and time-sensitive schedules and given that for these businesses an approval gets their employees back to work and is important for the overall cash flow, especially after the COVID pandemic and a drop in energy prices, can the minister please let us know if the Ministry of Energy is able to reassess any applications that were found to have administrative errors so that we can focus on getting people back to work?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that is yes. In phase 1 we had over 36,000 applications, as I noted, and many of them were put in on a very rushed basis, trying to get their applications in the door quickly, and they had administrative errors, things like incomplete clauses. They had subject-to clauses, incomplete, missing information. So I've instructed my department to reassess those applications. Many companies spent hours – some spent 18 hours a day – to get those applications in. We will take the time and reassess them where there were administrative errors.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta chose a model allowing companies to apply to projects related to SSRP and given the unique nature of my constituency, being one that is heavily influenced by the politics and policies of Saskatchewan, can the minister please explain why Alberta chose this approach to the distribution of grant money rather than the Saskatchewan Research Council's top-down procurement model?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The challenge here in Alberta is the enormous number of inactive wells. We have over 91,000 inactive wells in Alberta that have accumulated over six

decades or more of activity here in Alberta. With that, we have many, many more wells and well sites than Saskatchewan, and we have a much larger allocation of the federal funds, with a billion dollars to distribute. It's extremely important that we allow the program to proceed. We want to ensure that companies who have the ability to pay contribute, and we want to do that to ensure that the polluter-pay principle is honoured.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Buffalo has the call.

### 2:20 Federal and Provincial Economic Relaunch Funding

**Member Ceci:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has provided \$19 billion to provinces to help municipalities across Canada with the cost of reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been reported that this money is to go towards purchasing PPE, transit services, child care, and a paid sick leave program. To the Premier: can you list exactly how Alberta will use its portion of this funding, and if not now, when will Albertans learn how the funding will be used?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, this is a very recent announcement by the federal government. At this point in time we are working very closely with the federal government and our municipal partners to make sure that this investment in our sectors of our municipal governments and our economy achieves the right balance.

**Member Ceci:** Given that this Premier has doubled down on his failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout while leaving businesses scrambling during the COVID-19 pandemic and given that the Premier has refused to provide any details to date on a paid sick leave program despite endorsements for the federal initiative from some of his peers and given that a paid sick leave program would help prevent COVID-19 spread in workplaces by allowing workers to stay home when they're not feeling well, to the minister: will you finally reveal whether Alberta will offer a paid sick leave program and when? Workers need answers, and they need the support.

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As indicated in the House a number of times, our government continues to work with the federal government on what the outlines of a paid sick leave program might look like. The announcement was made just yesterday. We're continuing to work through the details, but we understand the importance of this, and I'd like to point out to the hon. member that CERB is in place if there is a need at this point in time. We'll continue to work with the feds to make sure we have a program that supports Albertans and Alberta job creators.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Minister. Given that there's more to personal protective equipment than doling out masks alongside Big Macs and given that businesses are saying that the \$5,000 grant from this government doesn't go nearly far enough to cover the costs of PPE, especially if COVID-19 is going to be part of our reality for many months or, God forbid, years to come, to the minister: will businesses be receiving additional support for PPE, and when? Or do you believe that the grant that you've offered is enough to cover their costs for the duration of the pandemic?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Member for Calgary-Buffalo that this province led the entire country in making sure that personal protective equipment was available to our businesses, our not-for-profit sector, and our municipalities. I am very glad that the federal government has stepped forward in recognition of the tremendous amount of work that Alberta and indeed all municipal jurisdictions in the country played in making sure that we contain the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Queen's Golden Jubilee Award Recipient

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my member's statement, Jesse Drwiega of Red Deer was told that he couldn't deliver his acceptance speech for the Queen's jubilee because he called out this government's cuts. I also understand that he had a meeting with the minister this morning, and no apology was given. To the minister: is it really the position of your government to censor Albertans who speak out against your terrible, cruel cuts? Isn't that a lot of Albertans that you would have to silence?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, I am completely baffled every single day when I stand in this House by the questions that are brought forward by this MLA. It was such a pleasure to meet with Jesse today and to talk about the award that he was given. The office of the Lieutenant Governor is a nonpartisan, apolitical office. That means that anything that happens under that office – and I was just a humble attendee along with the Minister of Advanced Education. It was such a privilege. We're very proud of Jesse, very proud of the accomplishments of all of these students.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that Jesse has some questions that he wanted me to personally ask the minister and given that I'm going to ask two of them now in this House – the first one: Minister, you say that you are a champion for the arts, but all you've brought forward are cuts to the arts. Is that because members of your caucus have said, quote, that the arts simply are not in our mandate?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, I would hope, Mr. Speaker, after the conversation I had this morning, that that MLA actually had a conversation with Jesse about me answering these questions already. Just to reiterate, we are in a fiscal crisis in this province. We are absolutely beyond lucky with the abundance of dollars that we have going to the arts, and we will continue to leverage those dollars. But it's also completely disingenuous for this MLA to be asking about funding for the arts supports when, actually, on their side they did nothing to support the arts while they were in government.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that I met with Jesse and given that he said that there wasn't clarity to the questions, here's the second one. Given that when the minister was deputy leader of the UCP, she urged her fellow party members not to adopt a policy in favour of outing LGBT-plus children in gay-straight alliance clubs and given that our arts communities are a place of solace for many LGBT people, what actionable steps is the minister taking to protect LGBTQ2S-plus youth in Alberta? What is she actively doing to protect LGBTQ2S-plus kids, and how does she justify the actions of some of her colleagues who have attempted to take away rights from LGBT . . .

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the level of division, bigotry, and the dark side of the NDP that continues to come out to create

division in a province where, really, all of us have been elected and come here to produce unity and to bring people together – I had such a lovely conversation with Jesse this morning to reiterate the importance of protecting all people in this province. We are so unbelievably blessed to live in a province where those protections of rights are first and foremost in the minds of all Albertans. Like everyone in this House, we will continue to protect the rights of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South has a question.

### Addiction Recovery Communities

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday was a great day. The Minister of Education and I were in Red Deer with our friends, our mayor, our Premier, and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to announce a recovery community for central Alberta. This will greatly bless individuals and families. It will provide opportunities to support Albertans choosing a better way, a path towards recovery from addictions. To the minister: how do recovery communities support individuals becoming free from addictions?

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

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. members of the city of Red Deer for their support to make this a new reality. Recovery communities are long-term treatment facilities based on the therapeutic community model that's used in over 65 countries throughout the world. They provide holistic treatment that focuses on the whole person and overall lifestyle change, not simply sobriety from drugs and addiction. We're very proud to introduce this world best practice to Alberta, and congratulations to the people of Red Deer on being the first out of five communities that are being . . .

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that Albertans have received the panel's review of supervised consumption sites and given that the panel listening to local businesses and families reported that the NDP fixation on drug consumption sites led to profound economic damage to local businesses and tearing of social fabric in our communities, to the minister: how do recovery communities provide a contrasting positive course correction, supporting and respecting businesses and families in our communities?

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

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely correct. The previous government's focus on the failed one-pillar approach was no solution or way out for people who suffer from addiction. When an expert panel listened to over 19,000 Albertans, they concluded that the current system is a system of chaos. We're going to correct all of that. We're going to fund detoxing, and we're going to fund treatment. We're going to spend another \$25 million to create 400 new spaces focused on treatment. We're going to get people out of addiction while protecting our communities' safety.

**Mr. Stephan:** Given that addiction is a challenge of human nature, success requiring beginning with the end in mind, supporting and loving our neighbours to become free from addictions, and given that the fixation on drug consumption sites lacked vision, was a

profound failure, with our families and communities suffering for it, to the minister: how will recovery communities inform a principled course correction towards loving and supporting our neighbours seeking to become free from addictions?

2:30

**Mr. Luan:** Mr. Speaker, I can't be more agreeable to the hon. member's statements. The previous government's lack of vision created chaos, created their legacy of social disorder and needle debris. We're going to clean up all of that. Instead of managing addiction where it is allowing the population to grow, we're fighting addiction by rapidly expanding access to treatment and recovery. We're creating the Alberta model that is leading the nation by helping people out of addiction into recovery.

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

### Health Quality Council of Alberta

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu resigned from the board of the Health Quality Council of Alberta in protest of this government's plan to place them under the direct control of the Minister of Health. In his letter Dr. Ogbogu states that this change, imposed under Bill 30, will affect the independence and objectivity of the council in its work and give the Minister of Health carte blanche to control, direct, and interfere with the work of the council. To the Minister of Health: why, at the same time as you're undertaking a massive transformation of our public health care system, are you undermining the independence of the body appointed to monitor it, or did I just answer my own question?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I reject Dr. Ogbogu's criticism of the recent changes to the Health Quality Council of Alberta. We're expanding its mandate and making it more relevant in its mission of improving the health system and making it more focused on the needs of Albertans. Changes to the council are part of our broader commitment to focus on patients and not like the NDP ideology. Professor Ogbogu's main point seems to be that having the council report to the ministry somehow impairs its functioning. I reject that entirely. The change makes us consistent with other provinces.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this minister wants to be consistent with the other provinces, he can stop fighting with doctors, give them arbitration, and stop chasing them out of the province.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that Dr. Ogbogu goes on to state that the government did not notify or consult with the HQCA before tabling this bill and given that he calls it the last straw in a pattern of behaviour from this government that involves shutting out vital partners when considering fundamental changes and given that this government indeed has a shameful record of shutting out experts in our health care system in favour of manufacturing reports and manipulating statistics, to the minister: what does it say about your plans for a public health care system that you're apparently unable and unwilling to be either honest or collaborative in your supposed reforms?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:32.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the professor makes it clear in his letter that he has much wider issues with our government in that he chose to make his resignation an occasion for a public statement of his differences with us. Now, I appreciate that an NDP appointee finds that it's impossible to serve a different government, and I respect his decision.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** It's unfortunate he didn't respect him before now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it was only last week that we learned that the Minister of Health is attempting to pressure the CPSA to force doctors to practise against their will to help cover for the mess he created and given that this follows on news he shut down an open hiring process to instead appoint the UCP's former executive director as Alberta's health and mental health advocate and given that he's now set his sights on the HQCA, to this minister: how badly are your decisions going to hurt and damage our public health care system that you feel the need to control every single independent body set up to defend and protect it?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That sound you hear is the NDP getting to the bottom of the barrel, scraping the bottom of the barrel. Look, if physicians are that important to the NDP, why have they still refused and failed to distance themselves from the xenophobic rantings and the false narrative that was created by one of their failed candidates when she called our international medical graduates, a third of all the doctors in this province, scabs? The NDP has an opportunity today to speak to our IMG doctors, a third of all our doctors, and make sure that they see that they are an important part of this system and not scabs.

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

### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our caucus dropped off letters from tens of thousands of Albertans who signed our petition at [handsoffmynccp.ca](http://handsoffmynccp.ca). Since I seriously doubt the Premier has read any of them, let me summarize. These Albertans do not want Alberta's Premier's hands on their pensions, and they do not want Alberta to withdraw from the CPP. Each time we ask, the Minister of Finance says that more study is needed on an Alberta pension plan, yet the Member for Taber-Warner's office is telling constituents, quote: we are going to pursue a referendum. To the Minister of Finance: when did you change your mind, and when is the referendum scheduled for?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that we are doing a deep dive. We're doing work and research to identify the opportunities, the costs, and risks of going with an Alberta pension plan versus a Canada pension plan. The Fraser Institute found that there were approximately close to \$3 billion in potential savings every year for Albertans. We believe we owe it to Albertans to at least investigate this great opportunity.

**Ms Gray:** Given that Albertans are concerned this government has already made up their mind and given that Treasury Board and Finance officials told the minister in a briefing note that an Alberta

pension plan would start with hundreds of billions of dollars in unfunded liability and given that the minister promised Albertans he would release a more detailed analysis on the significant risks posed by the idea and given that at least one MLA's office is already telling folks there will be a referendum, when will the Finance minister table any analysis for pursuing this policy? What is the holdup?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, just to set the record straight again, under a Canada pension plan or under an Alberta pension plan Albertans have the same amount of liability. We're responsible to fund future payments out of the pension plan. What we will do is continue to do some detailed analysis, again, so that we can properly identify opportunities and then put the question in front of Albertans should it appear that there is a reason to do so.

**Ms Gray:** Given that more than 30,000 Albertans signed our petition at [handsoffmyncpp.ca](http://handsoffmyncpp.ca) and given that thousands asked to appear before the private members' bills committee to express their opposition to withdrawing from the CPP and given that this UCP-dominated committee voted to kill my bill that would have protected Albertans' pensions from this Premier, why doesn't the minister just drop the act and admit that he will never table an analysis because he doesn't want people to see the real numbers before he pushes the referendum?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite never asked for debate on that question in this Chamber, so I take offence to that statement. What surprises me, what I cannot figure out is why the NDP opposes our efforts to create and find a fair deal for Albertans within this Confederation. We owe it to Albertans to discover every opportunity that could position this province in a better way, particularly at a time when we are in an economic recovery.

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

### Site Rehabilitation Program

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are concerned about the management of Alberta's orphan well sites. The economic downturn, not to mention the hostile provincial administration, thanks to the previous NDP and their activist friends, left companies unable to maintain operations, leaving many oil and gas sites at the end of their operational life unable to provide the necessary closure to these sites. Then on May 1 of this year the Minister of Energy announced the launch of a site rehabilitation program set to invest \$1 billion into cleaning up sites and putting nearly 5,300 Albertans back to work. To the minister: can you give the House an update on phase 1 and 2 of this program?

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you to the member for the question. I'm very pleased to share that as of this morning \$75.8 million has been allocated to 155 Alberta-based companies under this program. Just last week I had the privilege to visit a site on the Enoch Cree Nation alongside the Premier, the minister of indigenous affairs, and Grand Chief Billy Morin, Chief Alexis, and Stephen Buffalo of the IRC. The site we visited was the very first producing well on the Enoch Nation, dating back to 1941, and today it is being . . .

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that great news. Given that the previous government was always happy to pose with large cheques and talk a good game and given that their results, especially in regard to the Energy

portfolio, often left Albertans in the lurch as they overpromised and underdelivered, to the minister: how is this government ensuring that Alberta tax dollars are being prudently, efficiently, and effectively applied to the applicants to the site rehabilitation program and in getting Albertans back to work?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This \$1 billion program is meant to create jobs as well as clean up environmental liability. It will create 5,300 jobs across Alberta. Our process is being very, very careful to ensure that applications are judged fairly, that we do due diligence, and that we spread the work out amongst all regions of the province, including all sizes of companies, big or small. The program's success will be judged on the number of companies that receive work, the number of sites that are cleaned up, the number of jobs created, and the amount of work for . . .

2:40

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for her reply. Given that it is a testament to the drive for Albertans wanting to get back to work and given that it is also a testament to how badly this program is needed, with over 35,000 applications and hundreds of different companies to the site rehabilitation program, and given that it is obvious that that large of a volume could not be processed in such a short time but progress had to be made quick, to the minister: for the thousands of applicants not yet processed, will there be future phases for companies to reapply and be processed?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that is yes. It's a \$1 billion fund. We've only rolled out tranches 1 and 2, and we just rolled out tranche 3 last week. We've allocated over \$75 million. In opening up round 3, we are taking an approach where we're going to offer up to a set amount of funds to each and every licensee in Alberta, and shortly after that, we'll be rolling out another round that will look more at the area-based closure programs. We're getting people back to work here in Alberta.

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

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a tabling.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes, sir. Yes, I have a tabling. I have the requisite number of copies. I think that the Premier would find this interesting because he referred to it in question period. It's a report, *The Best and Worst Places to Be a Woman in Canada 2019*. I'd like to table that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table signed letters and corresponding memorandums of understanding outlining support for the western economic corridor that I spoke of the other day, including support from NAIT, Eavor geothermal, Big West Machine and Welding, BioComposites Group . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Smith:** . . . Pembina Pipeline, and Alberta Forest Products Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I might just remind members of the Assembly that the purpose for having you stand still when the Speaker rises is not for some sort of edification of the Speaker but for the Speaker to be able to determine who might like to address the Assembly and who is just moving about. If we can all do that, it will sure make our process a little bit more expedient.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Safety Codes Act the Safety Codes Council 2019 annual report; pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association annual report 2019-2020 and the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta annual report 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. There was a point of order called at 2:32, which has been withdrawn.

As such, we are moving to Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### Supportive Housing

508. Mr. Shepherd moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to partner with municipalities across Alberta to invest in the supportive housing required to end chronic homelessness in all communities.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and propose the following motion: Motion 508. Now, homelessness is a long-standing issue here in Alberta and indeed right here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre. Between 1999 and 2008 homeless counts in Edmonton showed a steadily increasing rate of homelessness. In fact, by 2008 homelessness in Edmonton was at an all-time high with more than 3,000 Edmontonians living without a home. It was projected that if action was not taken at that time, by 2018 we would have 6,500 Edmontonians experiencing homelessness.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So at that time the then provincial government formed the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness. They work with community-based services, municipal and city governments, and programs across seven major centres – Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and Medicine Hat – to develop a plan to end homelessness in Alberta. The goal was to do so by 2019.

The centrepiece of that work was the adoption of the model of housing first, the practice of making our first step in helping individuals experiencing homelessness to ensure that they are in fact housed, to give them a place to live without judgment or precondition. Indeed that has been a relatively successful program

here in the province of Alberta. Since it was first adopted in 2009, we've seen over 10,500 people in Edmonton housed. Despite that, here in Edmonton at last count we have just under 2,000 individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Of those, 56 per cent are indigenous, 44 per cent are women, 26 per cent are youth, and about 25 per cent of that total – that would be around 500 – are experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness. In other words, they've been consistently in that position for many years.

Now, episodic homelessness or chronic homelessness – episodic specifically is rooted in more complex challenges. It usually involves health issues, issues with substance use, mental health, or having experienced violence. Chronic homelessness – that is, the extremely long-term and ongoing homeless, often spanning a decade or more – is almost universally as a result of complex barriers particularly related to mental health and substance use. For those individuals the standard housing first model is not enough. Due to the unique and complex challenges that they face, many of them are not able to remain stably housed without significant assistance, so that's where supportive housing comes in. It's essential to helping those individuals because supportive housing provides continuous support for individuals who've experienced chronic homelessness or housing insecurity by combining subsidized housing with 24-hour on-site wraparound support services, including health care, addiction counselling and treatments, and other critical supports like mental health. It provides those residents with stability, safety, and a community with a staff and other residents.

Now, a fine example of supportive housing right here in Edmonton would be Ambrose Place, which is just outside the east boundary of my constituency, in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Now, Ambrose Place is a social housing apartment complex for 42 individuals who identify as indigenous. Some of them have long been considered some of the hardest-to-house individuals in our city. Most of them are long-standing substance users. Like many others experiencing chronic homelessness, they had frequent encounters with police and the criminal justice system, and they've been heavy users of emergency medical services, both through EMS and at emergency rooms like at the Royal Alex here in my constituency.

Ambrose Place welcomes those individuals, provides them a home in a nonjudgmental environment that embraces a philosophy of harm reduction, where indigenous elders, health workers, independent living workers, social workers, and addictions counsellors meet those residents where they are to try and improve their health and well-being and gradually reduce their substance use so they can find stability. It's been enormously successful not only in giving these individuals a better quality of life and reducing the attendant social disorder but in terms of reducing costs across multiple systems.

In fact, in 2017 Alberta Health Services released a report showing that two years after these individuals moved into Ambrose Place, they saw a 58 per cent decrease in their number of in-patient admissions at hospital, an 81 per cent decrease in their total number of overall in-patient days in hospital, a 74 per cent decrease in the number of overall in-patient acute days, a 45 per cent decrease in the number of times they visited the emergency department, a 31 per cent decrease in the number of EMS events they had, a 68 per cent decrease in the total number of noted addictions and mental health related EMS events, and a 54 per cent decrease in the number of noted respiratory cardiac related EMS events.

2:50

That is a significant savings, Madam Speaker, because a hospital stay for a person experiencing homelessness costs more than \$8,000



per day. A single emergency room visit costs \$840. It is far cheaper to pay the annual budget of Ambrose Place, which is about \$2.2 million a year, to keep those individuals housed and stable in dignity, in community, with the supports that they need.

Indeed in their submission to the Alberta government for Budget 2019 last year the city of Edmonton asked for \$124 million to help construct 900 units of supportive housing over the next six years here in the city of Edmonton plus operating grants for the medical supports needed to ramp up through 2026 to about \$24 million a year. They noted that the 8,400 people that they've been able to house since 2009 for an overall reduction of homelessness in our city of about 43 per cent has saved an estimated \$920 million in health and justice system costs.

That is why I'm calling on the government for increased collaboration with municipalities because this is a shared cost, Madam Speaker. The reality is that while homelessness is a local issue, it is also a provincial one, both in terms of responsibility and in terms of cost. When the city of Edmonton takes actions to house people, that saves us money provincially on the health care system and on other social supports. Calling on the government to partner with and reinvest some of those dollars to assist in that housing just makes sense.

At a time when the provincial government in some respects is in fact downloading a number of costs onto municipalities while simultaneously cutting back other supports, you might even say that there's even more reason for the provincial government to provide support on an issue that will save costs for both levels of government, create stronger communities, and improve the lives of potentially thousands of Albertans.

Now, I recognize that the debate today could quickly devolve into a vigorous round of finger-pointing and accusations about whose government spent more or did not spend or what our government may or may not have done. I mean, should it come to that, we do have a list of all the capital projects currently under construction or completion that our government did invest in. I'll let my colleagues address that if need be, but in truth that's not my purpose.

I'm concerned that the largest investment that we've seen from the government so far regarding homelessness in Edmonton has been to rebuild and expand a homeless shelter despite clear calls from the city and the community for at least a portion of those dollars to also go into supportive housing. I'm certainly disappointed that this government chose to cut \$53 million in funding from maintenance for affordable housing, but I recognize that this government is early in its mandate. It has time to make some good decisions, and I hope it will.

I recognize that it has formed a panel to conduct a review of affordable housing in the province, but I also recognize that the need is now and is pressing, and at a time when the government is looking to make capital investments to boost the economy, the city of Edmonton has four shovel-ready projects to build new and affordable supportive housing units in the city that would also create 740 jobs. That sounds to me like a reasonable investment. Plus Boyle Street Community Services has a new iteration of their redevelopment project, which previously had the support of the Minister of Community and Social Services, that would include 47 units of housing, leveraging private funds and partnerships, just waiting for the provincial government to step up and be a partner alongside the city of Edmonton as well.

There's the opportunity to act now in collaboration with our municipal partners to take real action that will benefit our economy, that will reduce costs for both the provincial and the local governments, particularly in health care, which this government has said is a priority, and to do so in a way that is going to build stronger

communities and better lives and indeed improve the economy for all Albertans.

I look forward to the debate, and I encourage all members to vote in favour of this motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government supports the motion before the Assembly. Our government is working with the municipalities across Alberta. We are investing in supportive housing to help those in need. We are providing social supports to help the individuals struggling with addictions and mental illness and other serious issues.

Madam Speaker, my ministry's capital plan 2020 allocated about \$417 million over three years to provide 2,000 new and regenerated affordable housing units. In January of this year our government announced about \$11 million of capital investments for 42 permanent supportive housing units in Lethbridge. On-site supports will help the individuals who live in these homes to get back on their feet. In May we announced \$26 million for capital maintenance and renewal for seniors' housing. We are working to ensure that seniors in need have access to a safe and secure place to call home.

Madam Speaker, earlier this month I was proud to announce the members of our affordable housing review panel. We need to address the growing demand. Nearly half a million Albertans live in a home that is not affordable and is unsustainable. Alberta's affordable housing system has not changed structurally for more than two decades. Our review panel will inform a new vision of affordable housing. The panel members will share their insights and advise to help us to make the affordable housing system more efficient and effective. We must continue to support vulnerable Albertans and make the housing more affordable and accessible.

Madam Speaker, we will support this motion today, and our government will continue its work to provide supportive housing and help Albertans in need.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 508. I just want to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre for bringing it forward. It's a very important and timely motion, and I'm very pleased to speak about it.

Certainly, right now, in the time of COVID-19, we know that housing is the first defence against COVID-19. Without a home Albertans can't self-isolate, and we know through some of the provisions that were made for people who are experiencing homelessness, centres were set up, but really that's just a stopgap measure. What we really need is supportive affordable housing so that people can have, you know, a permanent place to live and that they are well taken care of. As my hon. colleague just mentioned – and I will certainly expand on that – just what a difference it makes in any individual's life if they have a stable, supportive housing arrangement. It is a tremendously important and effective way to address concerns.

We know that, certainly, when the NDP was government – and at the time I was Minister of Seniors and Housing – our government committed a substantial investment in affordable housing, \$1.2 billion during our mandate, to really make a significant difference in affordable housing. The sad part of the story is, of course, that there was a big hole to fill. When we became government in 2015,

there had been tremendous neglect by Conservative government after Conservative government in terms of the investment in affordable housing, so there was a lot to do. As we well know, there's still much more to do, so that's why it's so important that more investment occur. Just to give people some perspective on that, our budget investment was four times greater than the last Conservative government's investment, so we stepped up and certainly invested significantly in affordable housing in our province.

In 2017 we created the first-ever in our province provincial affordable housing strategy. That was a guide to housing in our province. I think I just want to expand a little bit on what my hon. colleague who introduced this motion spoke about, that there is kind of, you know, a continuum of housing.

3:00

We talk about homelessness, and certainly people who are being supported to come out of homelessness need supportive housing. This is housing with wraparound services, so it's not just the bricks and mortar of a home; they often need other supports, maybe to do with addictions support. They might need someone to help them navigate government systems, someone to help them with their mental health, just sort of life skills things, some emotional support for these people. Having that wraparound service is so key because, unfortunately, what will happen is that people may have a home, but they can't maintain it. That's why governments must invest to help people stabilize so that they can be there long term and then start making more positive choices for their lives.

One of the things that we know, too, is that we generally define affordable housing as when a family or individual is in core housing need when they spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, so affordable housing is housing where people aren't spending that much, obviously. That is what is seen as, you know, realistic or that the best way for people to be able to care for their families is if they're spending no more than 30 per cent. That is called – if a family is doing that, then they are in core housing need.

We know that this is the situation in Alberta, that on a per capita basis Alberta has far fewer subsidized housing units than the rest of Canada. According to the most recent census subsidized housing represents just 2.9 per cent of Alberta's housing units. For Canada as a whole it's 4.2 per cent. That's quite a significant difference. That just again reiterates the importance of investment in affordable housing just to get us up to the, you know, Canadian average. We're behind in Alberta, and that's why investment is so important.

We know that Calgary identifies this issue regularly as a concern. They say that they need 15,000 units in that city alone for affordable housing to just get to the Canadian average. That's a significant investment that's needed in Calgary, and they certainly, you know, need to have that investment. In Edmonton it's described as 1 in 5 households spends more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, and of the Edmontonians who are renting, 41 per cent spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. That means that they're in core housing need. So when you're talking about just the major, large centres of Edmonton and Calgary, we have tremendous need, and there is need, obviously, in rural Alberta and the smaller cities throughout our province. Investment in this area is key, and that's why this motion is so important.

The sad piece here, Madam Speaker, is that of course this UCP government in their last budget had no new investment in affordable housing. They continued with the previous investments of our government, so there was some funding but no new investment. You can see from the statistics that I just identified that there needs to be much more investment.

It's not only a human rights argument, you know? There's a human rights argument – people need to live in dignity – but it's

also an economic argument. It actually makes good economic sense when investment is made in affordable housing. We know that oftentimes people who are homeless are using other systems – our health systems, sometimes the criminal justice system – and that actually costs much more than being able to provide an affordable home with supports around them. It costs less, and of course people live in dignity and they're supported to make healthier choices for their lives and be able to support their families. I mean, it just makes sense on so many levels, a human rights level and an economic level.

In fact, Vibrant Communities Calgary has done a report about the cost of poverty. I've cited this report previously in this House. They talk about how \$9 billion could be saved annually if there's an investment in social programs like affordable housing; \$9 billion. Just think about how many more people would be able to be successful in our province, able to live in safe, healthy conditions, especially now with COVID-19, when we really need to have our homes to be able to safely self-isolate. I just ask the hon. members on both sides of the aisle to think about how important investing in affordable housing is because it does actually save governments significant money.

You know, another thing that I want to bring up is just that one of the things that our government worked on when we were in power was the big-city charters. In the charters – of course, these were Edmonton and Calgary – we did have a plan to invest in affordable housing, working very specifically with these municipalities. Of course, the elected leadership in both Calgary and Edmonton intimately know the needs of their communities, and it's very important that they have a say in how dollars are allocated from the provincial level, but these city charters were unilaterally ended by the UCP government when they came into power. They didn't talk to the big cities about this. In fact, that was one of the things that they promised during the campaign, that this would stay intact, but shortly after they were elected, it indeed was, as I said, unilaterally ended.

This is sort of a sad state of affairs when the government isn't fulfilling their promises. We see that currently in other issues also, like what they've done with the AMA and just the complete stopping of their agreement with them. I mean, I just challenge the government to – I think a healthy province would be a province that is working with their communities, interest groups and not just stopping things. You know, there was extensive work done on that, and the cities were very grateful for that input, and we were working collaboratively, collectively to make sure that cities did have that support.

I just want to talk a little bit more about the specific big cities. Certainly, Mayor Iveson, when he heard the budget . . .

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

**Mr. Jeremy Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to be able to rise today and speak on Motion 508. Obviously, my experiences working with the homeless – my most recent experience before I got involved in politics was actually managing youth shelters in the city, including Avenue 15 and Safe House, and I worked with a lot of young people who were forced into situations where they were trying to find a safe place to live and often couch surfing, exchanging favours for a place to stay, often getting introduced to all sorts of not necessarily good things for them. One day we even got a call about a young person who was living in the shed behind somebody's house, and a concerned neighbour called to let us know about that. We know that when people are left with no choice, they can resort to desperate things and put their safety at risk, so I think this is an absolutely critical motion and conversation

that we're having here today and a big part of the reason why I ran for office in the first place.

I think that many of you know the story about my dad, who became homeless at the age of 12. He talks about a few of those stories, where he had to stay in places that weren't necessarily safe for him or created problems for him. One of his stories is actually from Christmas Eve. He was staying at a friend's house on their couch, and he ended up getting into a bit of a fist fight with his friend, and on Christmas Eve his friend's dad kicked him out onto the street. There he was wandering the street on Christmas Eve night in the cold. It was actually that night that he went to end his life, and, thankfully, due to reasons I won't get into for time, he chose not to.

Later on he found himself in a situation where he had to sleep on a park bench. He was under the influence, and he passed out cold on a park bench. It was actually in that scenario where an RCMP officer picked him up and threw him on a Greyhound bus, and that's how he ended up in Calgary. Then he goes on to tell stories about how he survived in Calgary. In fact, he was sleeping on a mattress. He had a spot behind a warehouse in the city, and he would sleep on that mattress until one day four guys found him panhandling in a Plus-15. He asked them for some money because he was hungry, he said. They proceeded to take him out for lunch and bring him to a place called the Burning bush in Calgary, which was a program for homeless folks to get out of the cold and connect.

3:10

From there he went to leave, and they said, "Well, where are you going?" And he's like, "Well, I've got this mattress I've got to get to so I don't lose my spot." They said to him: "Well, no, no, no. You're not sleeping behind a mattress tonight." They brought him home, and they put him in a room. They gave him his own room. He remembers there being a lock on the door so he could feel safe. He said that that whole first night he slept with the light on, not because he was scared of the dark but just for the novelty of a light.

No one should have to experience the fear and uncertainty that comes with not knowing where you will sleep at night, nor should anyone have to face the brutal decision of trying to make the decision between putting food on your table and paying your rent, not for yourself, nor for your family, especially not in a country as wealthy as Canada. That's why I rise in this House today in support of Motion 508. I regret that I feel like it's missing a few components, but I believe I support what this says.

I wanted to emphasize that it also – I already know that the government is focused on this, so I don't think we needed it in a motion, but as parliamentary secretary for civil society I have to mention the importance that the government work alongside civil society. That includes the number of many charities as well as private organizations that already do fantastic work in the community at building affordable housing and creating solutions in our community. I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all, and I believe that there is some amazing work that has happened through our charity and our private partnerships, and that continues to need to be built upon, working alongside our municipalities, our charities, and private sector to make sure that we're addressing the affordable housing issues within our communities.

The other thing that I think is missing – or, well, it's not missing. Yeah, I believe it's missing. Just this specific focus on the chronic homeless part: I think that we need to work towards ending homelessness in the lives of all people. That's, of course, helping those who have been on the street a long time and are dealing with multiple barriers to rehousing but also helping to make sure that we have supports for people who find themselves in the immediate

crisis of homelessness and being able to help people to be able to move and find affordable housing within this city.

When I worked at Avenue 15, for example, we would have youth show up in our program who had never experienced homelessness before. It wasn't introduced. There were no drugs or mental health addictions. They had often fled an abusive home situation. We found barriers in regard to helping those youth access housing programs that were available because they weren't deemed chronic enough. I think it's somewhat narrowly focused on "chronic," and I think we need to make sure that we're working towards providing solutions for all people that are experiencing homelessness, and we need to make sure our approach considers all of that.

My dad over 35 years ago founded the Mustard Seed, and some of my earliest memories of the work that he and the staff and the volunteers of the Seed did are of what they put into helping people who had no place to go. I can remember my dad bringing people home to our house. We used to joke that first emergency shelter was our living room couch. We had folks over for dinner who ate alongside our family. We often called them uncle or auntie, and they slept in our house as dad worked with them to help them move beyond homelessness. I remember the open-handedness and the spirit of compassion that my dad had. It inspired me.

As many know, I also had the opportunity to serve at the Seed myself for a long time. In those years I saw and talked to so many clients or guests, as we'd call them. Hearing their stories and their life experiences, I felt driven, like so many in this Chamber, to advocate on their behalf. In fact, I was actually an advocate for a short while and a support worker in our transitional, our step-up housing program. My job was to help our guests, among other things, find housing. We often struggled, of course, to help people find suitable and affordable housing. Many landlords refused to consider our guests. Many times people moved out into roommate situations that were less than great, or they ended up in the hands of slumlords within our city. I can name a number of examples of this. I could probably use more than my 10 minutes to talk about the numerous examples, but I decided to share a few stories, and I've changed names and a few details to protect people's privacy here.

I remember one night when I was working overnight in step-up housing, and a lady named Susan showed up at the door, and she was crying. She had recently been assaulted. I went with her and the police to the hospital, and I spent the evening with her in the hospital. Afterwards I went back to her living situation with the police to get her items as she wasn't going to go back to the place that she had been assaulted, and – I'm not lying – the room that she was staying in was no bigger than five feet by seven feet, where she shared a basement with 24 other people and shared one bathroom amongst those people.

I remember another lady named Ann. She had come to our program, she was addicted to cocaine among other things, and she had worked so diligently in beating her addiction and going back to school and getting her GED and then moving out of our program into her own housing. Unfortunately, all that she could afford was a situation where she had to move in with her boyfriend, who proceeded to be psychologically abusive to her over and over and over again. As I talked to her in that scenario, she couldn't find any other place that she could afford to live and proceeded to stay in this psychologically abusive environment.

Or another gentleman named Steve, who moved in with two people from our shelter. Again, he worked so hard to overcome addiction and find work. As he moved in with those two people – and this often happened to our guys – his roommates fell back into addiction. That hindered his own recovery, and he ended up back in our program six months later.

Even recently, as I've talked to leadership at both the Mustard Seed and the drop-in centre, their housing teams told me that they could literally move hundreds of people out of the shelter if there were more landlords willing to rent to their clients. There are people with low barriers to housing, but the stigma of being homeless prevents them from entry. When I managed at the Mustard Seed shelter, we used to do a poll on a monthly basis, and we actually found that 70 per cent of the folks in our program worked full-time jobs. We also found that most did not earn enough to pay rent and pay for food and other essentials that they would need to live on their own. That was the primary driver for them staying in the shelter. These folks were truly the working poor.

During the downturn, though, in 2008 we actually saw that number, the number of people needing shelter, drop significantly, by about 33 per cent. That was in large part because a lot of the folks that were staying in our program could now suddenly afford rent in the city. Of course, that effect was short lived as we pulled out of the recession and housing availability declined as rent prices rose.

At about the same time I had the opportunity to fly down to Portland with leadership from the Calgary police, the city of Calgary, the Homeless Foundation as well as within the Mustard Seed, and we got to see first-hand the housing and homeless model there in Portland that had helped reduce that city's homelessness by a whopping 73 per cent, which is pretty exciting.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is truly an honour to rise and speak to my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre's motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to partner with municipalities across Alberta to invest in the supportive housing required to end chronic homelessness in all communities.

I've appreciated already the comments made by speakers.

I've talked about housing and homelessness a lot in this House. Like a previous speaker noted, it was one of the issues that actually motivated me to get involved in politics when I first ran federally back in 2015, and it's an issue that remains really important to me. You know, I've talked about this in the Chamber a lot. I see it a lot in my communities. I see a lot of the visible signs of homelessness, and I've talked in this House as well about the fact that our current public health emergency has really highlighted the need for bold leadership to tackle homelessness here in our province.

You know, folks experiencing homelessness are our neighbours, our friends, our family members, and they deserve supports. Recognizing those who are right now experiencing homelessness, I want to give a shout-out to the incredible front-line workers, who I know are right now working nonstop to do everything they can to house folks, those folks working in housing, and, of course, as has been mentioned in this House already today, the interconnections between folks experiencing homelessness and struggling with addictions and mental health, so a lot of folks are working in those overlapping areas.

I said that I've had the chance to – you know, while I didn't work in the sector, I've really taken on the responsibility of trying to meet as many people as I can who are experiencing homelessness, trying to hear their stories, asking them what they need, how we can help. Probably the most obvious example of folks experiencing homelessness in my riding is some of the tent cities that have sprung up. You'll see them in the McCauley neighbourhood. You'll see them in Boyle Street. Sometimes you won't see them because

they're a little bit hidden. You'll see them in the ravines in my riding as well.

3:20

Truly, you know, especially when COVID was just starting, I went through one of the biggest tent cities and just kind of talked to people and asked them how they were doing and what they needed and let them know about some of the supports that were being offered at the time. I think I even shared this story in the House, just the fact that one of the things that struck me on my first visit this year to the tent cities was that I'd ask people how they were doing, and right away they'd refer right back to me and ask me how I was doing and ask if I needed anything, right? I get a little emotional because it's really powerful, and I would urge anybody who's not had the opportunity to just kind of wander through some of the neighbourhoods I represent, any side of this House. I'd love to welcome you, and we could talk with some folks experiencing homelessness.

While, of course, I can speak about things like tent cities and some of the challenges we face, I do need to acknowledge that there have been some important moves made lately by the city. The leasing of the jockey dorms at Northlands in my riding as well is one example. That's an example of bridge housing that's going to support a lot of folks very quickly. Another example is in partnership with the federal government. Homeward Trust and Boyle Street Community Services actually leased the Coliseum Inn, which, again, is actually quite close to my house. They were able to safely house folks in the midst of a pandemic. We were certainly a little bit concerned and so were a number of folks on the front lines about the safety of having folks on mats, mats that are perhaps not effectively physically distanced and whatnot. That move was one that we certainly need to acknowledge as well.

You know, there's so much more to be done, which is why I think this motion is so important. I'm not here to be critical of just one government or one level of government or one current government. Absolutely not. Allowing homelessness in our society is a choice that's been made by consecutive governments at multiple levels, and it's a failure of decades of inadequate housing policy, in fact, and we've seen since the cuts of the '90s exponential increases in homelessness both at a provincial and a national level.

Why I'm hopeful is, you know, because we've got this motion before us and because we've done it before. Past governments we've seen have built, have maintained, have publicly managed affordable housing units. They've done things like developing member-owned housing co-ops, and they've done things like investing in permanent supportive housing, and that's a topic that I want to focus on, just like my hon. colleague from Edmonton-City Centre did. Permanent supportive housing is so important for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. We know in Edmonton there is a significant need for permanent supportive housing sites. For a lot of folks, as I've highlighted, the alternative to permanent supportive housing is being on the streets, being in the ravine, or being in the river valley or trying to access shelter spaces, which are often, as many folks in this House know, difficult to get into, and there are also barriers that folks encounter when trying to access shelter spaces.

There are a number of permanent supportive housing developments. I'd love to highlight them all, but I'll talk about three briefly that are actually all within the riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The first one I want to mention is Hope Terrace. In fact, that one has a special place in my heart because it's just a few blocks from my house in Parkdale, and that housing facility is for individuals who have been diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It's a facility that's owned and operated by Homeward Trust in co-

ordination with the Bissell Centre, and a number of supports are provided for residents of Hope Terrace. The cool thing about this building – one of the many cool things about this building, I should say – is that most folks, you know, if I asked my neighbours if they knew what that building was, they wouldn't know. They wouldn't know it's permanent supportive housing. They wouldn't know that it's explicitly tailored for folks who have been diagnosed with FASD. I think that's the way it should be, right? These are our neighbours. We welcome them, we support them, and we love them. That's one of the reasons why I'm so proud to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, where we do have the largest share of folks struggling with homelessness as well as permanent supportive housing facilities.

That's one example. Another example is Christopher's Place. That's been set up at the George Spady Centre.

The final example I want to highlight, just like my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre did, is Ambrose Place. This is a permanent supportive housing facility that I'm so proud of. I've had the opportunity to tour it. I've had the opportunity to talk to the residents of Ambrose Place. I know a number of the folks who work there, and they are incredible. I'm doubtful that they're watching because I know that they're busy, but if they are, a shout-out to the workers of Ambrose Place. As my colleague noted, Ambrose Place has been a super successful model. It's a model that incorporates culturally sensitive environments. They make use of elders. They offer a whole number of supports for folks who are, you know, struggling with drug use, with alcoholism. They take a harm reduction approach, and it's an approach that has been successful. You just need to go and talk to folks who've experienced success because of that model just to know how fantastic this space is.

I have to also note, you know, that I know that the Minister of Indigenous Relations toured Ambrose Place and praised Ambrose Place, which is why it's so disheartening to see his own colleagues being so critical of a harm reduction model. They've said it on the record here multiple times. I hope that minister, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, has had an opportunity to talk to his colleagues about Ambrose Place. I know that I can show you the tweet where the minister praised the model and praised the workers and praised the residents of Ambrose Place because it works. Like I said, I'm so proud to have Ambrose Place in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Of course, you know, I'm not being critical of the minister. I was happy that he went there, and I believe I told him that after he visited. This was last year. I'm happy that he went there. But I hope – I hope – that more folks in this government are willing to tour some of these facilities to learn about how permanent supportive housing is working, not just in my riding but beyond, across this province. It doesn't need to be a partisan issue. This is about saving lives. This is about supporting our neighbours.

We know that Edmonton's lack of permanent supportive housing affects all of us because the costs of homelessness are huge. When folks experience homelessness, they often rely on hospitals, on emergency services, and when they're released . . .

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

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak to the member opposite's motion because it's an issue that must be addressed. Today too many Albertans are experiencing homelessness. Our government and my colleagues understand the pain that those without a home endure every day. I think of the many wonderful people I've met while volunteering at the DI in Calgary and also from downtown Calgary, where I worked, many who are affected by mental illness and substance use disorders, a

great many who have been traumatized in their lifetimes. Sadly, some of those are our veterans who have served our country, many who have no family here, and some who are just down on their luck.

What may surprise most people is the number of people who are working but came here from behind the eight ball and just can't get caught up enough to get into an apartment. All of these people are special and unique human beings with gifts and talents. You know, my experience has been that they're also incredibly generous of spirit. Madam Speaker, these people deserve a home. We must also be cognizant of the number of our indigenous brothers and sisters who experience homelessness and their unique plight.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to share with the Chamber a number of measures that this government has taken. First, capital plan 2020 allocates \$417 million over three years to provide 2,000 new and regenerated affordable housing units. This will create more than 3,000 jobs along the way and maintains the 26,700 unit provincially owned portfolio.

An independent panel of 10 members has been appointed by our government as well to review Alberta's affordable housing system and identify how we can transform the system to be more efficient and effective. The panel will consider the supports required for Albertans in critical housing need, explore market trends and projections, and compare approaches to housing in other provinces. You know, we need to take a look at those market trends and projections. That's part of the reason our numbers increased at one point in time. We need to have an understanding of what we're looking at in the future. The panel will also seek prospective housing providers, private companies, and civil society organizations to identify innovative solutions for Albertans in housing need.

3:30

I also want to point out that our government will be providing \$49 million to homeless shelters in 2021. This much-needed support will keep 3,842 spaces open in eight communities across Alberta.

That's on top of our government's response to the pandemic. One effort, that the member across spoke of, here in Edmonton, where we provided \$25 million for adult homeless shelters to open extended shelter spaces, isolation and care facilities for individuals with a COVID-positive diagnosis or who had COVID-19 symptoms or were simply waiting for their test results to return – and I have to say that I toured the facility here in Edmonton, and it was absolutely incredible, the amount of planning, the amount of care that was taken to ensure that folks were safe and well taken care of. Their medical needs in addition to COVID issues were also looked after in that particular space, and it was an amazing feat.

We've opened a total of 14 new temporary shelters during COVID to support these folks: Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, and Drayton Valley. None of this would have been possible, however, without the strong partnerships that government made with local communities and organizations who are committed to helping Alberta's homeless.

Madam Speaker, we need to keep in mind, too, the enormous commitment that this government has made to recovery communities. You know, the member across was speaking about harm reduction, which is part of a continuum of care. These five recovery communities will do so much to help individuals seek and maintain recovery. We've made a \$25 million investment to build five recovery communities, and that will go a long way to reducing a significant cause for homelessness in our society.

From emergency shelters to short- and long-term supportive housing, this government is committed to addressing homelessness head-on. Our most vulnerable need support, and our government,

in partnership with municipalities, civil society, and faith-based partners, is here to provide that support. Community and Social Services provides funding to organizations to operate permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and develop plans for homeless Albertans to eventually find a place they can call their own, a home, their home.

Homelessness in this province has declined over the last decade because local municipalities have also stepped up to do their part in addressing the issue, working with a provincial counterpart to develop co-operative jurisdictional strategies that address homelessness in a substantive matter. Such efforts equated to a 32 per cent decline in homelessness per capita in Calgary since 2008, and that's just one example.

Madam Speaker, I'm particularly proud of the recent announcement that our government has made. Our government has redesigned the indigenous housing capital program to increase the supply of affordable off-reserve, off-settlement, and on-settlement housing for indigenous communities.

I think this is more than enough evidence to indicate a strong response to the issue of homelessness in Alberta, and our government is working hard to do more. Madam Speaker, an individual's worth is not determined by what they have but, rather, who they are inside. That's why our government will stand and fight for Alberta's homeless. In closing, I refer to the words of the late Mother Teresa: "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our homes to remedy this kind of poverty."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to support the motion before us today, and I'll just briefly say that I'd like to make two brief points. One is that more units for supportive housing throughout Alberta are required in this province, and the second is that the provincially owned units of social housing that exist in our province already need greater support from the government of Alberta around maintenance and repair. We have to take better care of what we already have in our communities, and unfortunately there is far too much left undone in terms of repairing what we have.

I will say that the supportive housing needs throughout the province should follow where the chronically homeless are. We know that about 85 per cent of the chronically homeless in this province are in major urban centres, notably Calgary and Edmonton. It's not to say that Medicine Hat, regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie don't have homeless people as well as, like, Lac La Biche, but the majority, 85 per cent, of those who are chronically homeless are in our two major cities. As such, we should follow, the investments should follow where those folks are.

You know, the Homeless Hub website is a really good one that gives clear, accurate information, that's based on once-every-two-years homeless counts, point-in-time homeless counts in the seven major cities in this province. I've been on those counts many times over the years, and I can say that we know that in Calgary the last homeless count was done in 2018. At that point in time in April there were about 3,000 individuals who would see themselves as being underhoused, not housed, living in shelters and a variety of other places like living rough or in shelters or transitional housing supports or in correctional facilities or health facilities or in provisional accommodations.

In Calgary's case we know that about 3,000 people – 70 per cent of those would be chronically housed or living in one of those situations that I mentioned for more than half the year. When that sort of thing happens, you can imagine the challenges, the stresses on people, and we've heard some of those impacts talked about by previous speakers here. Really, if we want to address homelessness, we need to help people along that stepping stone to get out of homelessness. Supportive housing, community housing, is one of the first things and then on to deep-subsidy public housing, near-market public housing, and then finally market housing. That's the goal, and many people have made their journey along that basis. We need to see more support at the beginning end so that people can wind up at the market housing conditions or paying market prices.

The second point I just want to underline again is the challenges that our already existing housing stock in this province that's public experiences. It's as a result of previous governments, including ours and this one currently, where there is not enough investment to make sure that the housing is of good quality, high quality and that people can live for the long term. If it's not, then we see, you know, cities or operators of provincially owned housing talking about closing units because they don't feel like the units meet the needs of those people – they're not safe anymore – that are using them, and that's really going backwards, Madam Speaker, and challenging the systems in place that we have even further.

I took a tour of the new affordable housing along 16th Avenue in the community of Rosedale last Friday and met with the vice-chair of Calgary Housing Company as well as the program manager and the architect. It is modular homes that have been dropped onto smaller sites along 16th Avenue that were surplus to the road needs, so the street front of these units looked like it was about 20 feet, but the housing is in no way substandard. It was made up in the St. Albert area and shipped down to Calgary and craned over the sound wall. That's near-market, affordable, and market housing, and accessible as well, some of the units were.

That's not exactly what we're talking about here in terms of what the needs of the chronically homeless are.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but we will now allow up to five minutes for the mover of the motion to close.

3:40

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the contributions of all members who've risen and, it sounds like, all spoken in support of the motion here today. That's wonderful to hear because this is an incredibly important issue.

I did want to respond to a few comments that were made during debate. The Member for Calgary-Klein did point out the importance of working with civil society partners. Absolutely, I agree. They are important partners in this work, but I think what we need to make sure of is that we are doing so with the leadership and direction of our municipal governments. I know that we have seen here in the city of Edmonton the legacy of years of neglect as we saw defunding, starting at the federal level, moving down to the provincial level, and then eventually leading to lack of funding at the municipal level for affordable housing. That saw a lack of supply.

We saw a drastic increase in homelessness here in Edmonton, under the legacy of Premier Klein, with the closure of many mental health facilities and other supports. That, of course, left our civil society partners, who indeed did step up and did incredible work during a time when government had walked away from the table, and I applaud them and thank them deeply for that. But in the years

since, what we've had is that through competitive government funding we ended up with organizations competing with each other and not being able to collaborate, and we've seen a vast improvement in that landscape and that ecosystem. Indeed, I'd say that our civil society organizations are doing a great job now of collaborating and working together.

But ultimately it is our municipal governments who bear the cost of these challenges and deal with the social issues and other things that come with it. They need to be key leaders in this process, and that partnership and support from the provincial government, listening to what their needs are and what their requests are so that they can indeed work in conjunction with civil society and private partners to realize the best vision for our communities and our cities – I appreciate the member's comments as well about the need to end all kinds of homelessness.

Indeed, I focused specifically today on chronic homelessness because that has been a core issue here in my constituency, and indeed that has been the core priority of the Edmonton city council, that they have brought forward. It's incredibly important, indeed, that we provide supports across the spectrum, the full continuum, and I think we've seen a great deal of success in that. But I believe there is much we need to do to address the root cause of chronic homelessness, to help alongside the other work that is being done, indeed does need to continue, to see investment and support to address – indeed I appreciate all of the organizations.

I do not mean in any way to devalue the work that is being done in our emergency shelter system and through others who provide those supports. Those are essential, and those are needed as well, but I know that here in the city of Edmonton we have a situation where we regularly had spaces in emergency shelters sitting empty while individuals chose to instead live in the river valley. It is important that we have conversations about why those issues are and how we can better improve our programming in the way that we approach these systems to ensure that it is accessible and supportive for all individuals and meeting the needs of all individuals. Again, I think it's important, then, that we have co-ordination with our municipal governments and others to ensure that those services are indeed presented in a fully universal and accessible way.

I would also note, with that, that we also have a real need for day shelters. Again, in the city of Edmonton there has been much discussion. I had the chance to have this conversation directly with the Minister of Community and Social Services and pass on these views from the city of Edmonton and from others as we're working to address these issues in the community, the need for day shelter space and indeed, when we have emergency shelters, that it's not simply something where people are let out first thing in the morning and not let back in till night. We have a continuum of work that we need to do, and indeed all of our civil society partners will be part of that.

I appreciate everything that the members laid out about the work that this government has chosen to do. Indeed, this has been a long-standing issue. As I said, this goes back to the early '90s and federal government cuts under both Liberal and Conservative governments, leading all the way up to where we are today. We've made a lot of progress. We've got a lot more work to do, and at some point it is probably going to take not just a little bit here and there. It is going to take an extraordinary investment to truly get us over that last hump and root out this issue once and for all. I appreciate that the federal government has made many steps in that direction and look forward to the provincial government using that funding to address the issue.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 32

#### Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020

[Debate adjourned July 15: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and be able to add some comments to Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020. I don't know where to start and how to start on this. I would like to actually be clear in the beginning of my comments that I will not be able to support this Bill 32.

The government is claiming that they're bringing balance back to Alberta's labour laws. Looking at some of the changes being proposed under this bill, it seems like the bill is very biased and one sided, and it's the government's blatant attack on everyday working people. The workers of Alberta, Canada, around the world: the changes being imposed in this bill on them, some of those rights, you know, took centuries and centuries, generation after generation for them to fight for and to be able to exercise some of those rights. Those rights, I would say, are the bare minimum rights that bring labour laws in line with the UN's articles of minimum requirement for human rights.

Under this bill, as I have seen in the past bills, the government is moving in the same pattern that they started with their initial step last year after coming into office by passing the bill that has given multinational corporations large profits, you know, profits in the sense, I would say, that the government was going to give the multinational corporations one step at a time a 1 per cent tax rebate on their profits. The impact of that bill we could measure with only one company, as an example, a company like Husky Energy. That company in just the very first year with 1 per cent of rebate on their profits racked up about \$254 million, fired more than 700 people, and announced their future projects not in Alberta but somewhere out of the country, like in the United States and in other jurisdictions. If I'm not forgetting, it was New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. New Brunswick, probably.

3:50

We have seen that this government is claiming that they're bringing back balance to Alberta labour that will help create more jobs. We have various obvious examples in front of us that taking away from everyday Albertans has most basically a lot of effects, too. Like, there is a huge industry of non-unionized workers. Taking these rights from those workers will contribute to your perception that that will generate employment in the province. On the contrary, one thing is very clear. As we have seen after the tax credits to the big corporations, the power will shift to one side, the money will shift to one side, but that will not provide the guarantee to everyday Albertans that they will benefit from them and, surely, if it will guarantee that there will be more jobs due to this bill if the proposals in this bill are passed.

Some of the changes are very clear. If this bill is passed, the changes being proposed will have a huge impact on the workers of Alberta. I just wanted to focus on speaking to the changes. When I'm speaking, I have many examples coming into my mind as an ordinary Albertan and also a small-business owner, where I had a network of people working as a team. I'm struggling between: should I bring the examples first, or should I just focus on speaking to the changes of this bill?

When we see, like, the way it has framed the balance back to Alberta labour laws and you go through the bill and look at the changes, definitely there is more that we are taking away from the workers. Basically, it is addressing the issues, the rights, the bare minimum rights those workers have. The majority of those changes – there might be some very nominal, you know, changes; I would probably agree with them – will have an adverse effect. When you look at that, how those changes will affect the workers, definitely it will be a very, very negative impact on not only workers but the families of those workers. Definitely, they will lose the capacity and the strength to participate in the economy. That is not anywhere going to help further the government's action of movements to work on the recovery of the economy.

I just wanted to put some focus on the changes in this bill. This bill now allows the employer to cancel averaging agreements and impose averaging arrangements on employees. If this bill is passed, that's one of the proposals that will have an impact on the workers. This bill also puts, simply, more power in the hands of all the employers, the bosses, creates imbalance, and takes the power away from the workers. If this bill is passed, there will no longer be an agreement, and the employer can impose an arrangement. It will also affect and limit how workers are paid overtime for working 12 hours per day or 44 hours a week.

I have a serious argument to bring in. I have concerns, like, mostly whenever I'm just standing up and speaking to most of the bills. That was something, that was one of the mechanisms, you know, that me and my colleague from the opposite benches, when we attended the Westminster parliamentary process and procedures, I think, were taught. It's so hard to discuss the changes and bring the consultation and involve the stakeholders and witnesses, professionals, and the ordinary people into this before bringing this bill into debate.

Like, every time I stand up in this House, it's missing the piece of what – most of the time, not always, I will say. There was some piece of work being proposed, and we have supported that in the Legislature, in this House, but this seems like a very one-sided bill, taking the power away from the workers, giving more powers to the employers – they already have power – and creating a great imbalance. What kinds of consultations have we done on this? What kinds of, you know, proposals did the government and the minister and the people who were drafting take into consideration? That will be very, I would say, effective to let this House know. Who was involved in proposing this work, and also, when you started drafting this work, what was the impact of which organizations, associations, NGOs?

And the other thing this says is that when this bill is passed, it will extend the time from final payment of wages earned upon termination of employment from 24 to 31 days. That was something where, you know, I had very clear examples in my mind when I was operating my office. Mostly I had from six to 10 employees in my office – that varies depending on if it's summer or winter or if it's a booming economy, it's a slow time – and that is something we worked there as a family, as a small office. I remember how many times I would have to pay in advance, knowing the situation of that particular worker or person, and even have to work with those people with small, small things, how they are really working hard in their lives to keep things going.

So this little effect: I don't know where it's coming from, what consultation and what proposal government did, took into consideration when it was drafting this proposal. Ordinary working people working on bare minimum wage of \$15 – and, in my case, the people I have in my mind, they were not on bare minimum wage. Even I'm talking about back in 2015, '14, '13, way far from the minimum wage of when \$15 was introduced, the employees

were paid like \$20, \$21, \$22. Single parents, specifically single mothers: I know how they were struggling, you know, to survive and to make payment for their rent, putting food on table, taking care of their children, and how important this cheque was for them every two weeks. So that is something, when we are proposing – I am thinking this is a great mistake unless the minister can just elaborate some of the knowledge behind it and where it's coming from, on how this is going to help everyday Albertans by moving this change.

One of the other changes is to overtime. Overtime: I have looked at it some here. Now, usually the employer pays overtime after 12 hours of work per day or 44 hours of work per week. The way it was calculated was by the employer averaging the work of two weeks, so it will not be the case after this bill is passed. If that is the reality, then definitely, you know, it is a very serious concern, to oppose this bill. That has worried me.

4:00

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to rise and comment. I was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Meadows raise some concerns about Bill 32, particularly about overtime averaging arrangements in regard to termination pay. There again seems to be some misunderstanding in terms of the bill, and I wanted to set the record straight.

First, in regard to the overtime averaging arrangements, Madam Speaker, the provisions in the current code that we are removing – and the members opposite seem to believe that we're removing the restrictions of 44 hours per week as the requirement for an averaging period and then the maximum 12-hour days, that overtime wouldn't apply in that maximum. That clause that we're removing talks about scheduling, but it doesn't talk about those two requirements. Those two requirements remain. There still is a maximum of a 12-hour day, and overtime will apply over the 12-hour day. Also, the 44 hours per week on average still continues to apply. Under the previous government when they made significant changes in Bill 17, they put that in the regs, and it still is in the regs.

I'd also like to point out to the members opposite that that provision, the general provision for 44 hours a week to be paid overtime, remains in the overtime in the code. There seems to be some misunderstanding, but, Madam Speaker, through you to them, the fact remains that the 12-hour-per-day maximum remains in the code and the averaging 44 hours per week for overtime averaging arrangements. That still is the case. Not only is it in the code, but it's also in the regs, and that's where it was before under the previous government, when they put how overtime gets calculated in the regs. That remains there. The story that members opposite are telling, that this is the elimination of overtime, simply is not correct. Overtime arrangements will continue to apply, 44 hours a week, and the 12 hours continue to apply.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is in terms of the termination pay. Now, members opposite have suggested – and I've risen in the House earlier to talk to this, and I'll try to be a little more fulsome in this explanation here. The reality is that under current pay systems – and the hon. member may know this, having run a business – the requirement under the code is that you must pay within 10 days following the end of the pay period. Most pay periods in Alberta are on a two-week cycle, so you actually have to pay within 10 days following the end of that two weeks. What was really strange about our code, Madam Speaker, is that upon termination you had to pay within three days at the end of the termination date, which had nothing to do – it's actually earlier than



10 days following the end of the pay period. Most people who are working expect their pay every two weeks, but remember that's up to 10 days following that pay period.

What we're suggesting with this change is a change to not impact the amount that employees may receive from termination pay but to be able to put that pay on the regular pay cycle or the one following, depending on when the termination comes in. We're doing that because that provides an opportunity to save job creators money, and they are desperate, Madam Speaker. All the changes that we're doing right now in response to COVID-19 and our economic recovery plan are to provide greater liquidity for employers so they continue to employ Albertans. Really, that's what our focus is: balancing the labour laws, reducing red tape, getting Albertans back to work. This change that we're making – under the current code it's three days after termination; it has nothing to do with your regular pay schedule – is to put it on the regular pay schedule.

Madam Speaker, we were concerned when we said this: what happens if you're on a monthly pay and you're doing the pay after the monthly pay? That could be two months. That is simply too long. To be able to protect workers, we said that it's in the 10 days following the regular pay to a maximum of 31 days, depending on when you fell on the pay. Does this mean, as is being suggested by the members opposite, that you will get no pay and your regular pay cycle is gone because we're changing this? That is simply not the case. Our intent here is to put it under the regular pay cycle so that if someone is terminated, they will get their regular pay at that point in time 10 days after – just like it is today – the pay period ends, and then the maximum they can get their termination pay, which is the next pay period, which is designed to cover – the purpose of termination pay is to cover that period when you will be looking for work if you don't actually get the notice, and that would be on the latest, the next pay, or 31 days.

Madam Speaker, I urge the members opposite to reflect upon the information that I'm providing because what they're saying to Albertans simply is not correct in this regard.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? There's like 10 seconds. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Well, you know, I understand that liquidity is important to business owners, but to the people who have been terminated...

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm so sorry, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and enter into the debate on Bill 32 at second reading. I'm cognizant of the time because my 15 minutes to enter into this debate at second reading is going to go blazingly fast, so I'm going to use this, my very first opportunity to speak to Bill 32, to review at a high level a lot of the changes and concerns that I have and with the intention to be able to dig into each of these more throughout the debate.

Let us begin. Bill 32 changes a number of pieces of legislation, but in my mind it has two major pieces, changes to employment standards and changes to the Labour Relations Code. I'm going to start on the changes to employment standards, which is the topic that the debate has taken us in at the moment. I'd like to begin by talking about those two very key issues around final pay, or termination pay, as well as averaging arrangements because the minister has just stood and exclaimed that the members opposite

must not understand. I can assure him that we do understand what this legislation is doing, and we foresee very, very difficult circumstances for Albertans who are now going to have to live under this regime.

The minister has said that the final pay changes are to tie in with the regular pay periods, to make sure that we're reducing costs for employers, and, in fact, in their own press release suggested that this will save \$100 million with an average savings of \$91 per fired employee. To get to \$100 million: that is a very bleak vision of Alberta, I would say, Madam Speaker.

Leaving that aside, the minister is incorrect when he says that this ties it to the pay cycle. His legislation does not. There is nothing here that says that the employer must pay this person on their next pay cycle. That tie, that connection isn't actually in the legislation. That's the justification. That's the reasoning the minister is using. What it actually does is allow the employer to take up to 31 days. Now, his expectation may be that employers will use it on the next pay cycle. His hope may be that this is going to smooth things out, but what actually happens, in fact, is that it gives employers up to 31 days.

The minister has already mentioned the scenario where someone may be paid monthly and the potential impacts that it could have. Let me state in language that I believe the minister would have to agree with: the change here lets employers pay their terminated employees later than before he changes the legislation. Right now someone can expect and know that they will get their pay within that three days if they are giving that notice within 10 days in the case of layoff during a time when often – when someone is losing a job, changing jobs cashflow can be really important.

Let's keep in mind that we're not just talking about a single paycheck. We are talking about vacation entitlements, other entitlements someone might be entitled to when they get that final paycheck. We are talking about whatever hours they've worked plus. Plus question mark; we don't know. It depends how long someone might have been an employee there.

Another statement that I believe the minister would have to agree is true: this will allow employees who are terminated to get paid later than they would expect under the current version and could allow them to be paid later than a usual pay period. Again I will point out that the legislation does not require that the employer pay the person on the next available pay run. That's not in the legislation, so Albertans and the opposition caucus are rightfully concerned.

**4:10**

Averaging arrangements. Currently there is something called an averaging agreement, and the difference between the words "agreement" and "arrangement" is significant because it's really telling a different story. Right now in averaging agreements employees can go to their boss; bosses can come to the employees. A measure of negotiation is implied in the word "agreement." The word "arrangement" helps us to understand that what's happening now is that more power is being given to bosses to decide and to impose.

We are waiting on the regulations to follow through with some of the things the minister has said, but I really, really want to emphasize that we are removing the employee voice, and there's a key phrase that the minister is using in his op-eds and in his answers here in this place, and that is: 44 hours per week on average. That "on average" is incredibly important because it is now averaged across 52 weeks, where before it was 12. So getting to not having to do more overtime and not crossing that 44-hour threshold on average just got a lot easier for employers because the on average is now across a much longer period of time, and that average can be

decreased by an employer saying: “We’re going to put you on an averaging agreement for the whole year, and you’re just not going to work in August, but now we’re going to go over 44 hours per week on a lot of other weeks. You’re not going to get paid overtime for that.” The on average is really important.

I want to be very clear that the members of the opposition can see what this potential impact could be on workers having their voices removed, having these agreements imposed upon them, and I support my colleagues in rejecting that Bill 32 balances anything because what it does is essentially put more power into the hands of the bosses and take away power and voice to workers and impact their pocketbooks potentially.

No layoff notices. That will absolutely have an impact on workers.

Termination pay. Another 30 days before someone gets the termination pay that they are owed. Now, in today’s context there are a lot of people where that extension of termination pay is a benefit because of COVID-19. So when I speak to 60 days to 90 days, we are talking about outside of the COVID rules which we currently have, which allows an employee to stay attached to an employer for a very specific reason. Generally speaking, when someone is laid off, the number of days until they do get that termination pay has been 60 days, is now extended to 90 days and will take longer.

The employment standards section also includes variances and exceptions. Exemptions to employment standards are going to be made easier not just for employees but entire groups of employees. Employer groups and associations will be able to apply to the director for mass exemptions to the Employment Standards Code. Currently employers, individual employers with a unique circumstance can apply to the director, but those groups need to come to the minister. I believe there’s a really important reason for that. If you are making large sweeping exemptions to employment standards, that needs to be something that no government enters into lightly. There needs to be proper consultation.

I would note that the changes here also remove the reason for any variances or exemptions to be able to comply with section 74(3)(b), which is essentially that “the Director is satisfied that issuing the variance or exemption meets the criteria established by the regulations.” I infer by this that there will be no regulations governing what exemptions a director can give and grant to entire groups of employer groups and associations. I’m concerned about this section, Madam Speaker, and concerned about the potential implications.

Group termination changes in employment standards. You no longer need to notify the employees or, if they are unionized, their union when mass layoffs are about to happen. The notices that the government and unions and workers get play a myriad of different roles. One of the things the government could be doing with that is making sure that there are supports set up for the employees who are being terminated, making sure that there are benefits or job resumé skills, all of these things. With the government potentially not doing that, perhaps that’s work that trade unions can and have done when they find out that a large chunk of their members are going to be terminated because a group termination notice has been used. So to whose benefit is it to no longer have to tell people about those large terminations? That’s information that not only the government can use but labour organizations as well as the workers.

Payroll deductions. Now – surprise – your paycheque can be lower. Surprise. In this case the change is that instead of talking to a worker in advance, making sure that that person understands why the payroll deduction is happening – it will be for reasons of overpayment, or perhaps someone was already given vacation days and hadn’t earned that many and now they’re leaving the job, those

types of things – now the onus will be on the employee, after they receive notification that this money has come off or maybe when they see \$500 short on their paycheque, to then try and track that down. What if there is a dispute? Now the onus is on the employee to try and make this right while being out the money that they believe they are owed.

Changes to rest periods, making it less clear that if somebody works, for every five hours they should have 30 minutes of rest. So taking away people’s breaks, Madam Speaker.

The pay for stat holidays can be decreased now, changing the definition of average daily wage, because people were getting too much on those stat holidays. Instead, I know that the government that hates red tape is going to give employers two different calculations. The reason we give people two different calculations is so that the employer can pick whichever one is cheapest for them, further reducing the pay that Albertans get on their stat holidays. This harkens back to previous changes to stat holidays. Again, my time is almost gone already, Madam Speaker, and I’ve only started talking on the first half.

The change to which jobs youth can do without needing a permit, let me just say, by lightly adding a whole new swath of jobs into the no-permit category for 13- and 14-year-olds. The minister said in his op-ed, “In practice, nothing will change.” Well, what will change: instead of employment standards knowing where these workers are working and making sure that the employer is aware of the special risks and monitoring that is needed for 13- and 14-year-olds, nothing of the sort will happen. The department will not know where these 13- and 14-year-olds are working. There will not be an ability to go and proactively confirm that things are working as they should. There’s no proactive opportunity to engage with the worker or the employer because now they’re permitted and they’re allowed.

I have to say that I’m concerned about janitorial, hospitality, and some of the other words that have been used. We haven’t seen what this changed list of jobs is. We all need to be aware that light janitorial can involve exposure to hazards and chemicals. It can. By putting light janitorial on a list, I’m very concerned that there will be no permit issued, no opportunity to check in with that employer to make sure that the employer is aware of what is safe and reasonable for 13- and 14-year-olds versus older employees and to put these precautions in place.

Now, we only have a few moments left. I will quickly transition into the labour relations side. The labour relations side of this: based on my understanding of Canadian mainstream labour laws, this is so far out of the Canadian mainstream that the minister using the word “balance” seems a bit ridiculous. We will be the first jurisdiction to dabble in far-right, Republican-style, antiunion legislation. American-style labour legislation we have talked about, but it’s not just American-style. We’re talking far right: repress unions, repress their ability to organize.

The changes inside the labour relations section infringe on freedom of association in different ways, infringe on freedom of expression. They logically do not even follow each other in some cases. The minister and the government, in defending Bill 32, talk about the importance of employees having choice, yet they include in here things like closing the open period, something that has been determined, as I understand it, in the past as violating the fundamental rights of an employee. They include that here because it benefits a select few, friends and insiders.

4:20

The changing of union dues and the deductions are about suppressing opponents and suppressing the voices that are fighting for strong public services, suppressing the voices that are fighting

for worker rights. It will have the negative impact of impacting charities throughout our province. I can't even tell you how many millions trade unions provided in support to just the Fort McMurray wildfires, never mind so many other causes across this great province.

It's going to create a huge amount of red tape. The red tape for unions is likely deliberate to tie them up, but it will also cause red tape for the employers, who are going to be responsible for deducting the correct percentage of a percentage of a thing that is coming in regulation, where they can change at any time what is on this side or that side of what is considered political or not.

Let me be very clear . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to just jump in. I was edified and quite educated by the member's comments to this point. I'm particularly struck by the last couple of things that you were talking about in regard to the open period and advocacy, and I'm hoping you can elaborate on that.

My feeling is this, that these are actually constitutionally illegal. The process of taking them through the courts is long and arduous and very expensive and time-consuming, and other parts of this very same bill might make it more difficult for labour to, in fact, take these cases to the Supreme Court because they have been hamstrung in their ability to collect the monies to fight for justice and equality in the workplace. Perhaps she could help us with that.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, and thank you to my colleague. Absolutely, these sections are unlikely to survive a Charter challenge because these are private organizations that are democratically run, and union members have a number of avenues to address any concerns about how their democratic organization, that already operates with fiscal transparency, can be managed.

Now, I do want to mention that Bill 32 is being introduced in the same session as this government is blowing huge holes into third-party advertising rules to allow more corporations to be able to engage in freedom of expression when it comes to our elections. In the same session huge swaths are being given to corporations, with big money being brought into our elections through Senate, referendum, and local authorities and municipal elections changes, at the same time suppressing the voices of democratically run organizations. What is being done here through Bill 32 doesn't hold up if you consider a voter wanting to hold back some of their tax dollars because they don't agree with the war room. I can imagine there is a voter or two who wish they had that option.

Shareholders being able to dictate exactly what happens with their investment, other private organizations, members of the CFIB, or even workers having a say on whether or not their corporate employer weighs in on a major third-party campaign and spends \$500,000 related to a Senate election race – when you look at what else has been brought in, you have corporate voices being lifted and worker voices being suppressed, and that is not balance.

Finally, I will mention what is also not likely to survive Charter questions, the changes to picketing. The freedom of association and the freedom of expression in Canada have been debated a number of times, and those conversations are ongoing. The sections here that are going to make it harder for secondary sites to happen: I understand this is modelled off another jurisdiction. I can tell you there are still a number of lawyers who have strong concerns about

these sections and their Charter applicability and what will happen as they make their way through that process.

There are a number of other changes within this section. I eagerly await the opportunity in Committee of the Whole to be able to talk about each one fully in turn, but what I will say is that Bill 32 disadvantages workers. It does not balance anything other than – no. It does not balance anything. I will just say straight out that the changes to the average worker's pocketbook are significant and that the restrictions on freedom of association and freedom of expression are very, very serious.

I and my caucus colleagues will not be supporting Bill 32, and I hope to introduce a number of amendments and to work, perhaps, with this government to improve this legislation where we can through the debate process in this place.

Those are my initial remarks on Bill 32, but I look forward to being able to say all of that plus more as we go forward into the debate. Overall, I will just have to say that this bill is a blatant attack on working people on a number of fronts. It will cost workers money, and it restricts their rights and freedoms. It does not benefit them, so it must benefit large corporations, friends of this government, in a way that greatly concerns me as someone who did update legislation in this field, genuinely looking for balance in the Canadian mainstream. This is neither of those things, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to get up in the House and speak to bills before us. Of course, this particular bill, Bill 32, is really an affront to working people in the province of Alberta. Now, I understand that the minister of labour is representing specific interests. He's made that abundantly clear when he gets up and talks about the fact that business owners need more liquidity when it comes, specifically, to the issue of moving from three days to 31 days to pay out someone once they've been terminated.

There's nothing wrong – there's nothing wrong – with supporting Alberta businesses. There's nothing wrong with it, and I want to make that abundantly clear to this House. But the problem here is when we're going from pieces of legislation that treat workers fairly within the province and then we're actually stacking the deck against those workers. Now, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has elaborated substantially on some of these, but before I go and complement some of those issues that she brought up, I specifically want to speak about unions because I need to understand and Albertans want to understand why this UCP government is out to attack unions.

What is their problem with unions and the fact that unions are there to protect the rights of workers? Now, Madam Speaker, I fully disclosed previously in the House that I used to belong to a union. I used to belong to the union at the University of Alberta, when I was an employee there, that represented the Non-Academic Staff Association of the University of Alberta, and when I wasn't pleased with my own union and the way that it was actually functioning, I decided to get involved in my union. The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods spoke to this, and this is what I need to make abundantly clear to the members from the other side, that unions are institutions that are democratic. The foundation upon which they rest in our society is a democratic collective.

Now, I understand that the members from the other side just don't like this word "collective." They don't want people to come together and support one another to defend their rights. They don't want this, but that's exactly what a union is. What is the problem

with workers coming together to say, “Look, these are the injustices that we are experiencing in the workplace, and we want to work together as one collective voice in order to address these problems that we are experiencing in our workplace”? The fundamental reason for a union existing is to address these particular problems that workers are experiencing in the workplace.

I’m going to give you an example. When I was at the University of Alberta, you may know that under the presidency of Mr. Rod Fraser at the university at that time, he decided that he was going to take the janitorial workers at the University of Alberta – normally Non-Academic Staff Association members were the people that provided janitorial service for the entire University of Alberta, but under the leadership of this individual, he decided that he was going to separate it, and certain buildings were going to be contracted out to other companies and that nonacademic staff, workers that did janitorial service, would remain in some of the buildings.

4:30

Now, while I was an employee at the University of Alberta, the University of Alberta decided to contract Bee-Clean to do some of these contracts. They decided to start bringing in temporary foreign workers. Bee-Clean also used to hire people that had language barriers, and there’s nothing wrong with this. We want diversity in our workplaces. But the problem was that their rights were not being respected. They weren’t being paid on time. There was actually one temporary foreign worker that Bee-Clean ended up having to pay more than \$50,000 to. Now, I can’t even imagine, as a working person here in the province of Alberta, being owed \$50,000 for my labour, that the employer would actually hold out \$50,000 over a period of a year, as someone who is, like, doing the job of janitorial service. This is a huge injustice. It’s a huge injustice.

When you start talking about taking away the power of unions to actually represent the rights of workers, I start getting concerned. I start getting very concerned because it’s under these kinds of circumstances, when unions aren’t allowed to represent the interests of particular workers, that we start to see these types of injustices happen right here in the province of Alberta.

Now, I want to stress again that these unions are democratic institutions. There are elections that take place. I repeat to you, Madam Speaker [interjections] – you know, as the members from the other side chime off over there, I don’t know what it is that they’re saying, but of course, if they want to get into the debate, then perhaps they should stand up and debate inside this House rather than beaking off there.

Madam Speaker, unions are democratic institutions. They’re democratic institutions upon which people can run for election, and that’s what I did. When I didn’t happen to agree with certain aspects of the union that I was part of, I decided to get involved in my union. I started off by becoming a member of the bylaws committee. From there I began understanding more and more about how a union works and how it represents its workers. Along with the members of the bylaws committee – they were so impressed with the level of advocacy I had towards workers’ rights in particular, that they said: “Rod, you know what? You should run to be vice-president of our union,” because that particular position was coming up that year. Based upon their suggestion I decided to run for vice-president, and I won. I had a great time working on making our union more solid, making it a better union in the interests of all the workers that we represented.

At that time, Madam Speaker, we represented over 5,600 members at the University of Alberta, Non-Academic Staff Association workers. People were so pleased with the job that I did

as a vice-president that they said: “Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, why don’t you run . . .”

**Ms Hoffman:** They said that, hey?

**Member Loyola:** That’s exactly what they did because they knew it.

**Ms Hoffman:** The future Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** “The future Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, why don’t you decide to run for presidency of this?” And I said: “You know what? I will gladly serve the people if that is what people want.” I decided to run for the presidency, but I was democratically elected. People knew the kind of work that I was doing. I actually got out there and campaigned and talked about the vision that I had for our union.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, unions are one hundred per cent transparent in terms of their finances to all of their members. A hundred per cent. You know, I can’t speak for every union here in the province of Alberta, but I can tell you that the Non-Academic Staff Association would have one annual meeting and would have quarterly meetings as well. There was financial reporting at each of these meetings. Members were encouraged – the information was sent to all of the membership, to each and every member, well in advance so that they could look over the finances of the union, and if they had questions at the meeting, they could bring up those questions. They didn’t even have to wait for the meeting if they didn’t want to. They could actually bring up those questions at any time to the entire board of directors of the union or the treasurer of the union at any time that they wanted to. There was no hiding what the union was doing like the members for the other side would like to suggest. Each and every member of a union has the capacity to get in touch with the treasurer of the union, with the board of directors of the union and talk about what are the issues, any issue that they want, not just the finances of the union.

But, of course, when the members from the other side get up to speak in this House, specifically about this particular issue, they make it seem like the board of directors of these unions has something to hide and that they’re not communicating this information to the members of their union. This is categorically false, Madam Speaker, and I want to set the record straight. I would really appreciate it if the members from the other side would stop getting up in this House and suggesting otherwise because each and every member of a union has the capacity to speak, to ask questions about the finances of their union.

I could go on and on and on about unions and how they’re democratic institutions, that there’s committee work, that there’s, you know, annual meetings. There are a number of meetings that go on inside of unions where people actually have the opportunity to address these issues on a number of avenues within the union.

But I’m going to get straight to the point, and that’s that I want to introduce a referral amendment. Of course, the question that I have for the members of the other side, for this cabinet, this government, and this Premier is: who did they consult when it came to Bill 32? With that being said, Madam Speaker, I have a referral motion that I’d like to put forward, and I’ll wait for your sign.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment REF1.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, please proceed.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’ll just read the referral motion into the record. MLA Loyola to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 32, Restoring Balance in

Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, as I indicated, the primary concern that I have is who this cabinet and who this Premier and who this minister of labour actually consulted when it came to the issues that are being brought forward in Bill 32. Now, he's made it abundantly clear that he's consulted with members of our highly respected small-business community, medium-sized business community, people who are in this province to help employ people, and I understand that. We want to make sure we support our business owners. We want to make sure that we are supporting and creating the conditions for a strong economy as we continue to battle COVID here in the province of Alberta. There is no doubt about this. But this does not mean that the existing rights of workers that we have under current legislation should be sacrificed in order to meet that particular end.

4:40

Now, it's already been brought up by the members for Edmonton-Meadows and Edmonton-Mill Woods, of course, and I'm sure that many other members will bring up the same issue. How does extending the time from a final payment of wages earned upon termination of employment from three to 31 days make life better for workers in Alberta?

**Ms Hoffman:** It doesn't.

**Member Loyola:** Yeah. Thank you. It doesn't.

My question to the minister of labour is: did you consult working people on this particular issue? I can imagine that, being an individual – and, you know, it happened to me when I was a teenager. I remember getting laid off when I was a teenager and then wondering, you know: when am I going to get paid? It happens to a lot of people. For X reason, whatever the reason may be, they're terminated, whatever the situation may be, but they are highly concerned.

Now, you know, I'm not quoting directly because, of course, I can't remember exactly what the minister of labour said, but he said that this was in order to create liquidity for the business owner. I agree that this is an issue. Having been a business owner myself, I understand that liquidity is a huge issue, and being able to address all the expenses that you have as a business owner is absolutely essential, but I would never sacrifice the pay of someone who . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to take this opportunity to caution members not to use names in this Chamber, even if it's your own name, even if it's a great story including your name, or even if you're moving an amendment with your name in it.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for some of the questions. I'd like to spend the opportunity to address some of the issues raised by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'd also like to touch on a couple of comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods. I do recognize that 15 minutes was very short in time; we'll have more debate later. But I also appreciate that 29(2)(a) is also very short, so I'm just going to touch on a couple of issues.

First, in regard to termination pay, Madam Speaker, I'd like to point out the language we're changing in the termination pay. It needs to be made "10 consecutive days after the end of the pay period in which the termination of employment occurs." That's mirroring the language of the requirement for any regular pay that has to be made, but this is to a maximum of 31 days to deal with the issue of someone on a monthly pay because we didn't want them to wait until the end of the monthly pay. I just wanted to clarify that point.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Now, to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who calls this out to attack unions, Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the case. Our approach is to provide balance to labour laws. Under the previous government Bill 17, which was, by the way, 124 pages, which makes Bill 32 look svelte in comparison, made massive changes to employment standards and the Labour Relations Code. It increased the cost to employers at a time when there was a tremendous recession, and the implication of that is that Albertans lost jobs. We understand on this side of the House that we need to have balance in labour laws, reduce the red tape, so we can create jobs for Albertans, and that's what Bill 32 does.

Now, in terms of the assertions on the other side that we're out to attack unions – and this is going beyond the pale – the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at the balance, this tipped the balance far, far to the union friends of the New Democrats on the other side, and we're bringing it back to the middle.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that there were certain things that were put in Bill 17: reverse onus, first contract arbitration, remedial certification, which never existed prior in the law. And guess what? We make some changes to that in here. We tweak it, but those remain. We're restoring balance because the way that it was written by the NDP didn't follow the rules of good labour relations and good policy. We are adjusting that.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government under Bill 17 implemented – and I may have this number wrong – six different types of leave. We kept those in there. We didn't touch those leaves. The reason is because they make good sense, and it was good policy. Our focus, our approach is good policy.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, the member opposite also spoke to the transparency of unions. Madam Speaker, it is puzzling to me, you know – and they say that this legislation is out of balance and that it's U.S. style – that when we take a look at the requirements to ensure that financial statements are available to union members, not anyone else but union members, those requirements exist in all jurisdictions with the exception of two, PEI and here in Alberta. It's curious to me that the previous government didn't recognize: hey, this is a hole in the legislation, and we need to address that to make sure that union members have the comfort that they understand what their unions are doing. But did they do that? No, they did not. So we are doing this. Is this out of line with what's going on in the rest of the country? It's not. Union transparency, the requirement to provide financial statements, is in line with the entire country.

Now, I do want to speak briefly and very briefly to the opt-in provision, Madam Speaker. The changes that we're making in this legislation to ensure that union members have a choice and they can opt in to political activities or campaigns was a campaign promise. We are delivering on this. This was a campaign promise. We heard that there were union members that were concerned, concerned with what their unions were doing and what they were contributing

to, which was against the interests, quite frankly, of some union members and the interests of Alberta.

Now, the other side is suggesting here that this is going to impact their ability to have a voice for unions. Madam Speaker, that is simply not correct. This is about choice, a choice for the individual member on these particular issues, and if they choose to contribute their dollars, they can continue to do so. If not, they have the option to do that. But this doesn't mean that the unions can't run campaigns on whatever they want. The unions still have that choice, but so do their members. Their members have a choice to do that.

When we take a step back and we look at the overall intent behind this, which is to restore balance, that's what this is. But it has to be understood in the context of what the other side did in Bill 17 and the tremendous negative impact it had on jobs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there hon. members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to be here to speak today on the hon. member's amendment. I read it, and it's a bad amendment, and it needs to be not supported. Now, to be clear, everyone in Canada respects basic labour rights. There isn't a person that does not. Let's talk about those basic labour rights. Reasonable pay: reasonable pay is a fair right. You know, they fight for things like benefits, like additional health insurance, health insurance which supplements our Alberta health care insurance plan – remember that for the future, okay? – good working conditions, making sure that those conditions are adequate, like lighting and heat and air conditioning and things like that, being treated fairly and going through a process if you're getting terminated, or being supported if you have other issues.

Now, what's ironic is that the member that put forward this amendment is a big fan of Venezuela and Hugo Chávez. It's really disappointing because that is a place that truly did not respect any of these things regarding labour, okay? This is a nation that chased out all its oil expertise. Fort McMurray, of all communities, in 2005 received 300 families; 300 engineers and petrochemical experts all came from Venezuela. They told us everything about the country, about how the opposition gets jailed, about how the media who spoke out against the government would get imprisoned, or in a lot of these cases people just outright disappeared, and it's very disappointing . . .

**Ms Gray:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, point of order.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. Just under 23(h), (i), and (j), the member began his comments by saying "What the member opposite believes," and then proceeded to start making arguments along that frame. I think that that is an example of "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," and I would simply ask that the member debate the legislation, debate Bill 32, the contents of the bill, rather than telling our members what they believe and do not believe. That is my request, Madam Speaker.

4:50

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

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think it's important to note that the hon. member was simply providing context for this House on which we can sort of build on and have a thoughtful, mature conversation. In terms of whether the members across, you know, like Chávez and support that type of regime, I mean, I think that everyone in this Chamber knows that they're fans of Venezuela politics and that type of socialism. At best it's a debatable point, so I certainly don't see a point of order here.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, this is not a point of order, but I will caution the member – actually, I will caution all members in this House – on using examples of other people's beliefs in the past or whatever it is. It may certainly cause disorder in this House. We should stick to the issue at hand, which is the referral motion on Bill 32.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To go on then, when unions do seem to get some criticism from our government, recognize that they're criticizing the government and that they are truly political entities, they outright say misleading comments, like we're attacking pensions or we're attacking freedom, which I heard other members mouth today, which is not right.

Now, I'm going to give an example of some of the things that the good minister is trying to provide with this bill, which is to allow union members to not be paying for things that they may not support or understand. For instance, with my private member's bill I'm trying to support more access to plasma products, medications for Canadians. There is an agency that speaks out against this, and they're called BloodWatch. They're funded by the unions out of Ontario and whatnot, and their objective is . . .

**An Hon. Member:** No, they're not.

**Mr. Yao:** Then they can open up their books if they want to be truly transparent and accountable.

Let us talk about BloodWatch for a moment and what their objective is. Their objective is to fight for a safe and secure blood supply. To be clear – to be clear – the unions are investing in this group, and their members may or may not know that they're actually investing in this group. This group is fighting a fight that was won a long time ago. Every Canadian believes in a safe and secure blood supply and plasma supply. These are the vital products that we need to live after we've been in a major accident or had some internal trauma or something. It helps us in our surgeries and our operating rooms and our emergency departments.

The fight for a safe blood supply happened in the '90s after the Krever inquiry, after the tainted blood scandal. In this day and age there is not a Canadian that does not believe in a safe and secure blood supply. We want it to be ethically cleansed as well because we donate it all, and we want to ensure that Canadians overall have that basic product that gives us that right to life. Again, this is a fight that's been experienced. It was done, and it was finished. Every Canadian believes in a safe blood supply.

Yet you have this group, who continues to fight for a safe and secure blood supply. I would counter that the hypothesis is that they're more about ensuring that a union steward shop is protected from any competition, and I'll challenge that openly and on the record and on *Hansard* any day of the week. They aren't there for the patients. They aren't there for the 50,000 patients across Canada

that need these very vital medications. They are looking for arguments that aren't there.

Madam Speaker, that is an example of something that union executives approve and that union labour groups pay for. If the members of those unions knew what they were investing in, would they approve it? That is the question here today. This is what the good minister is trying to provide, for those individuals to have the freedom to choose who they invest in.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for this time and this opportunity to speak on this bill and this amendment, and I would certainly hope that the House does not support this amendment. Thank you so much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wasn't expecting to come this afternoon to debate the voluntary blood supply. But I guess that's an area that the member chose to speak about, so I'll continue with questions and comments in relation to the prior speaker.

The prior speaker this morning in committee certainly had an opportunity to ask questions of the group that he is now in this Chamber trying to defame and criticize the reputation of. I'll remind all hon. members, because not everyone was able to be in the committee this morning, that BloodWatch is a voluntary organization that was created with family members and those who were directly impacted themselves, either as patients or family members, by the tainted blood scandal. These are people who care deeply about ensuring that there is a safe domestic supply of all blood products for the people of Canada.

So to come in this place and to espouse false motives to them is, I think, disingenuous at best, and I think it's actually quite problematic in terms of being able to take things that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is saying with a high degree of credibility. If the member wanted to discredit the organization, he certainly could have at committee this morning. He could have taken the opportunity in Q and A to ask them the things that he is accusing them of in this place, so I think that it is not becoming of this Chamber or the member to do so in this way.

I do know that we will have an opportunity to debate this bill in this place because members of the government caucus voted to see it continue to move forward. We will definitely have an opportunity to engage in that. But I do want to remind that hon. member and all members of this Assembly and all Albertans that BloodWatch is a voluntary organization driven by people who had direct lived experience with the tainted blood scandal here in our country. I think it's something that none of us ever want to relive, and I have tremendous respect for their lived experience, the expertise they bring to the debate, and the fact that they were one of only two Canadian delegations that spoke to the EU when the EU was considering their future with regard to paid or voluntary donations. I think that they have a lot of credibility on this issue, and I was grateful to be able to ask questions of them. The member chose not to but is here to speak disparagingly about them in this place, and I think that that is inappropriate.

I do want to say that there are a number of organizations that engage in different types of advocacy, and I think that that's their democratic right just like it's the democratic right of organized labour – and when I talk about organized labour, some of the folks that I'm picturing are the people when you go to get your COVID test who are giving you your nasal swab or your throat swab. Many of them have chosen to organize and to have an opportunity to have a collective voice. These people, who are putting their lives on the

front lines to be able to support and care for all of us, to make sure that we have an opportunity to live in this province with strong public health care: I want to thank them for their service, not come to this place and try to discredit them or their motives. I think that that isn't becoming of this Assembly.

When I think about the nurses on the floor of the Misericordia, for example, where they're dealing with a COVID outbreak that is being talked about nation-wide and North America-wide, I think about the fact that they are fighting for safe working conditions for themselves, which are also safe in-patient conditions for the patients that they are caring for. You know, health care workers organizing to make sure that they have a collective voice is something that I respect, and so does our Constitution. Our Charter, rather. Sorry. A lot of people have been talking about the American Constitution over the last few days, and sometimes that language gets into your brain.

I have to say that I respect the fact that workers have the ability to have a collective voice in standing up for one another but also standing up for all Canadians and all Albertans in this context, and I think that that's something that we shouldn't be here celebrating the erosion of. I think we should be finding ways that we can enable all workplaces to have more participation from worker-representative organizations, including unions, because I think that sometimes organizations can forget to look to the front lines and look to the workers for solutions, and oftentimes that's where a lot of solutions are housed.

I know that when the Premier was running to be Premier, he talked a lot about wanting to listen to the front lines in terms of health care. He talked about managers managing managers, and, you know, it seems like the workers are the last of his priorities now that he's Premier.

5:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, sometimes during debate there is a wide swath that is given. Moving forward, in this Chamber we will stick to the relevancy of the matter at hand, which is the referral amendment on Bill 32 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

I cannot recognize you, hon. minister, to speak as that will close debate, and I do not think that we are quite there in this House yet.

Are there any members wishing to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** On the amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh. On the referral amendment.

My apologies, hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration. We are now on the referral amendment, which resets the clock for all speakers, and I will recognize you if you would like to speak to the referral amendment at hand.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That is exactly what I want to do. I'd like to speak to this, brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Again I assume, based on the questions from the member, that the concern and the reason why he's bringing forward this amendment is his belief that there was insufficient consultation prior to that, so it needs to be studied more. I'm just making an assumption based on the questions provided.

As I informed the Legislature during my opening remarks for second reading of Bill 32, we did extensive consultations on changes to the Labour Relations Code and the Employment Standards Code in the fall, and this was all pre COVID, so there were multiple in-person consultations with both labour groups and employer groups. We also received over 60 written submissions on the Labour Relations Code. In addition, Madam Speaker, on the Employment Standards Code we did a survey. We received over

5,400 survey responses and again received written submissions from employer groups, employee and union groups in this regard as well as through the red tape reduction.

Madam Speaker, given the extensive consultation and, more importantly, given the need of us to get Albertans back to work, Bill 32, in terms of providing balance to Alberta's labour laws, reducing red tape, and getting Albertans back to work, is an important part of our economic recovery plan, so moving it into the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future – I do not agree with this amendment. I do not support the amendment. We need to make these changes. We need to make these changes now. We need to get Albertans back to work, so I would ask members of the Legislature not to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm glad to hear that the hon. minister of labour has indeed consulted people, that there have been submissions, that there were a number of people – I believe he stated that there were over 60 submissions if I'm not mistaken. I'm hoping that the hon. minister of labour will then table all of those documents in this House so that we as the opposition can then review all of those documents and see exactly what was stated in these documents and who were the ones who provided those submissions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would refer the hon. member to the website [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca) in regard to the submissions, what we heard. We have a summary of what was provided to the government in terms of the submissions and what we heard both from the employer and the employee side. I'd refer the hon. member there.

Thank you.

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Respectfully to the minister of labour, I do not want a summary. What I would like is for each and every submission to be tabled within this House because I believe it is the right of all the members of this House to see exactly what was stated in these submissions. So I'm asking once again if the minister will please table all of those documents in the House for all of us to read.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to join debate on the referral amendment, REF1, on Bill 32? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I do appreciate the fact that the minister is so engaged with the debate in this House although again it's – I've never seen a minister pop up on 29(2)(a) as often as I have today, so my wheels are turning now because the minister gets to open debate, close debate. I thought I was under the impression that 29(2)(a) was primarily intended – I'm fighting with this chair behind me right now – for private members to ask questions. But I appreciate – and I mean that with all sincerity – that

the minister is responding to comments and questions that the opposition is posing. That is greatly appreciated and noted.

Now, with this bill I appreciate the minister saying that we're restoring balance to the workplace. No. I'm sorry; we're not. I get that it's a matter of debate. It's opinion. I can tell the minister that – you know, I've been in this House long enough and debated enough labour bills and looked at Alberta's labour legislation – until 2015 Alberta lagged behind the rest of the country when it came to standards and protections for workers. It was under our government that we brought Alberta to the middle of the pack with the rest of the country. Of course, the opposition cried about how we were antibusiness and only favoured workers.

Again, in this bill I don't understand if the members have some kind of personal bad experience with unions – I don't understand the absolute vitriol and hate that they have for unions – because this legislation is not bringing Alberta into the middle of the pack with the rest of the country. It is not at all. It is a blatant attack on workers. Now, I will give you folks credit that at least when you have it out for a group, you don't mince your words about it. You don't try to hide it, right? I mean, there are some things that the government has done that even the former PCs at least tried not to be blatant about, attacks on different things, from parks and others. But at least the government is quite vocal and being open about: you know, we don't like unions; we'll talk about that, and we'll tell you about it. Now, granted, there have been members of the current UCP, the former Wildrose, that have stood in this place and actually said that, so no surprise.

But I don't understand why what's supposed to be bringing balance to Alberta workplaces – why, like, you've taken the pendulum and you've swung it to the opposite side: I'll talk about that.

Now, I appreciate that the minister did say that he's consulted numerous people and individuals and companies. I don't know if the website actually lists all of the individuals and groups specifically that were consulted. That's a legit question. I know that when we were in government, for several of our bills that was a question posed by the opposition at the time, for which there was more than one occasion where we did produce the list of who was consulted with. In fact, when I had the honour of being minister of economic development and trade, I did often list the companies, associations, organizations, and entities that I spoke with before designing programs. I think there'll be an opportunity in Committee of the Whole for, you know, much more of this kind of interactive dialogue. I hope the minister will come forward with not just who was consulted with but who is asking for certain changes that this labour bill makes.

Now, the labour bill – and it may not be as long pagewise as the bills that were brought in under our government. I mean, quite frankly, that means not a lot because you can make significant, sweeping changes with a couple of sentences. The longer the bill is, the more it goes actually into details and makes smaller amendments versus broad-scale amendments.

But I do have some questions for the minister, and I appreciate that he may have responded to some of these. That's okay. I just want to make sure that I get some of my questions on the record. Now, it took a little bit of reading to get my head around the averaging agreements and some of the changes that are being made to them.

Now, the minister did reference some concerned workers that he spoke with previously. I'd love to know exactly what their concerns were because, again, as some of my colleagues have pointed out, when you talk about, you know, payment and final payment of wages earned, I don't know how many workers would say: I'm



okay with you taking even longer to pay me my final pay period; in fact, I want that.

It kind of falls in with the argument that was made under a previous debate where the government claimed that people were asking for a pay cut. I've never met someone who's said – now, granted, I will say that there have been incredible men and women, because of the current situation as well as the situation back in 2015, when the global price of oil collapsed, who voluntarily took a pay cut in order to help ensure that others didn't have to be laid off. So, yes, it does happen under extraneous circumstances, but I've never met workers lining up to say, like: "Yeah. You know what? Cut my wages. God, we earn way too much. Let's slash that."

5:10

A worker saying, "Yes; please take longer to pay me," also doesn't make sense to me. The change that's being made may help employers, but it doesn't help employees. Again, I get that employers may have a liquidity issue. There are other tools available, Minister. This one is not necessary, where you're now picking winners and losers. The winners are the employers; the losers are the workers. There are other ways to provide support to companies that are struggling with liquidity issues.

Now, as I had mentioned, the averaging agreements: part of the challenge – and my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods framed this very, very well, that we're talking about a formula that, instead of looking at I think it's two weeks as far as whether or not overtime will be applied, is now being averaged over the course of the year. Now, that may sound like it's – well, I mean, I don't know how it would sound like it's fair, but maybe for some it does. I think, you know, the fact is that by switching this, the government is essentially giving employers the ability to not have to pay out overtime.

Now, the challenge with this change is that our criticism of it is of the government. Make no mistake, we're not criticizing employers. If employers had a choice to save money, most of them will take it. Now, they're obviously – you know, we know that especially small and medium-sized businesses and, I would even argue, your multinationals care about their employees and they care about their workers. But I can tell you that the reason that we have legislation, the reason that, for example, unions came into existence to begin with is because there always are some bad apples and there always are examples of those who would try to take advantage of some of their employees.

Now, you know, again, we want to make sure that both sides are being protected. This brings me back to my original point. This doesn't bring balance; this swings the pendulum back out of favour of our actual workingmen and -women. In addition to the overtime issue and, again, flexibility for employers to determine how and if daily overtime applies . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, just a reminder that we're on the referral amendment. Please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I mean, the arguments that I'm laying forward are the reasons why I will be supporting this amendment to refer this to committee. As my esteemed colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie pointed out, we are all interested to know who was consulted with, how they were consulted, and, honestly, what some of their feedback was.

[The Speaker in the chair]

A great example of consultation – and again I'll give some credit to, two governments ago, the former PCs. When they initially began engagement with municipalities on bringing forward significant

changes to the MGA – of course, members will know that that's the second-largest piece of legislation that we have on the books – that extensive consultation was needed. Our government continued that consultation, but what I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that it was available and made public, and it was an outward-facing document so that Albertans could see what positions municipalities were taking. It was almost a transparent dialogue between the government and municipalities.

My point on that is that it was known who the government spoke with, which groups, and their positions, again, which I think is really important. I mean, you know, it's easy enough for the minister or a person to stand up and say: we've consulted with tons of people, and this is what they're asking for. Okay. Well, who's asking for what specifically?

Back to the purpose that I'm supporting this referral, it is because this bill clearly needs more work, so I'll happily send it to the Economic Future Committee.

Other concerns that other colleagues, including our leader, have pointed out – and I don't know if the minister has spoken to this – are the fact that there are employers that are able to get younger people, especially 13- and 14-year-olds, hired without needing a permit. I think the minister did touch on it, but I would love a little bit more clarification around: what types of jobs are allowing that? I know that there are some exceptions that already exist, but of course we want to ensure that we are protecting young people especially.

There are sections of this bill that allow employer groups and associations to apply for exemptions to all or part of the Employment Standards Code from the director and not the minister. Now, that's interesting. It's interesting that the minister is essentially passing on these powers and authorities to a director. Some of our concerns and questions with that: that in and of itself may not be a bad thing although, again, I'd like to know what oversight is going to be in place for the director. We know that there are certain oversights when some decisions have to be approved by the minister.

One of the concerns is: is this opening the door for a lower minimum wage for people with disabilities or for restaurant workers? I know that the restaurant lobby is very, very strong in this country. You know, I think we'd like not just assurances, but again, if we're looking at this section, I'd love to know the purpose of it. What was the logic behind it? What employment standards exemptions should be granted? Who's asking for them, and what exemptions specifically?

Now, it does in this section talk about exemptions for consecutive days of work, daily hours to avoid overtime pay for those employees not subject to the averaging arrangements. This I find really interesting. It allows employers to choose the lowest amount payable for holiday pay, which I find interesting. It used to be the average of four weeks preceding the holiday. In fact, you know, I started working myself, Mr. Speaker, when I was 14 years old. My first job was in a Dairy Queen. I remember trying to work as many Mondays as possible because, in that way, when the holiday landed, of course, you'd get time and a half.

Now, my understanding of the bill is that the change that it'll make now gives employers the ability to allow for a cheaper option. They can choose the last four-week pay period closest to the holiday instead of the average wages of the four weeks preceding. That's a concern. Again, I appreciate that some employers would probably enjoy that saving, but of course it needs to be fair for both workers and employers. I can imagine those that depended on that pay.

I was fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that I was in a household. I had two working parents. My part-time job was a part-time job for extra money. It wasn't a job that I needed in order to pay the rent or to

pay for groceries. The reality is that there are many, many people in Alberta who have minimum wage jobs who need every penny, and now taking this away could be the difference between them being out on the street or paying the bills.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the members opposite for, as always, a compelling argument. I almost found myself leaning towards them, but then I came back to my life and some other points that I experienced.

First off – and I do appreciate the members opposite. We always have good jibes back and forth and have a mutual respect. One thing that I have to set the record straight on: the members opposite assert that we don't like unions.

5:20

In my personal circumstance – I don't know who they've spoken with before – but they make this assumption. They call us: you folks. They paint us with the same brush, and I'm not going to take offence to it like some may. I don't find it offensive if they want to paint us in that category, but we don't.

Mr. Speaker, I have a confession to make. I'm a recovering pro-jaholic. I used to work major projects my entire life. I was fortunate enough to work on both SAGD facilities and upstream facilities. I worked in Canada, the U.S. I even had a little tour over in Europe for a while. I love projects. The interesting part with those jurisdictions: you work with unions, non-unions, different things. I mean, you've got projects where you have half the site unionized and where half the site isn't unionized, all working collectively together. For me, personally, I have no issues with them. A lot of my mentors were either from the boilermaker trades or some of the other trades.

When they're talking about consultation, I don't believe any one of those members opposite went out to Keephills and consulted and said: hey, we're going to shut down all these union jobs that you have out at the mine because we're – I don't know – rushing headlong towards shutting down the coal industry. I don't believe any of them went and consulted. I'd love to see your list of all the individuals you consulted with, the regular workers, saying: hey, why don't I jam this carbon tax in on you and have you paying a bunch of extra cash for the rest of it and take away from your paycheck?

Those same union people out in that area are, for me, the ones that ran a UCP sign with my name splattered all over their front lawn because they didn't want any more of the empty promises made by the NDP, the No Democracy Party or PAC or whatever they want to call themselves these days, who, in fact, didn't consult them and do not represent them. One of the things – and let's not mince any words here, Mr. Speaker – that they're concerned about, the biggest thing that they're concerned about, is that people will actually have a choice of where their union dues are going to, the opt-in, and it will not support your policies and some of the things you're putting out there.

All unions are not created equal, Mr. Speaker. All unions are not created equal. I'm used to dealing with the building trades hands: boilermakers, et cetera. The interesting thing that came back from them when they had their conference out in Jasper is that they said: "You know what? You're the only politicians that actually stuck here through the whole conference to hear what we had to say and interfaced with us."

**Ms Hoffman:** That's not true.

**Mr. Getson:** That is true. That was said to me.

The other thing that took place, Mr. Speaker, was that we kept in contact. These are the same people that consult, and we're talking about the skilled trades task force. We're sitting at the table. These are fellow task force members that we're talking about. We're the ones that are doing the input and the consultation. To hear all of this other rhetoric: it's not quite there.

The one thing I do like about Bill 32 is that we get a chance, when we actually have major projects to negotiate, to bring everybody into the house at the same time. You can negotiate with one union, with all the different subsets, rather than having individual trades come in at the same time. It gives us that optionality and that flexibility. It gives certainty for the hands on where they're going to be working, how long they're going to be working on those projects, and what their deals are going to be. It literally starts to bring back the balance again.

Arguably, it may have lagged for a number of years. We were way behind in 2015. The NDP brought in some changes, and you know what? The minister has recognized some of the good changes. We're not swinging it completely back to the opposite side, as you might have suggested. They're actually bringing it to that centre of balance. So the good things that you guys had in place: yeah, we're going to keep them. That's what the minister said. The minister has said that repeatedly.

About these other stories: I'm not sure where it's going. Again, it really comes back to choice. One of the other things that I put to them, being a new politician sitting in with some union hands – the first time we were meeting with them, they asked: "What can we do to work together, collectively? Our economy has been hammered like you wouldn't believe. We've all been under attack by the same issues, so what can we work on together?" I said: "You know what? The NDP owns you. They own you." The iron worker came back and said, "They do not." I said: "I know that, and you know that. But every time you hear this noise out there and you're not speaking up for the working people in the province and you're getting this political affiliation getting in the way of the actual industry, they own you." You know what they did? We've kept in contact nonstop all the way through this, through the skilled trades and other things. We're moving the ball down the field, Mr. Speaker.

Coming back to some of the union hands, I know people in my area don't exactly like Gil McGowan being their poster child, speaking from the things that they say. I know that people in my area, the doctors out there as well, don't necessarily agree that the AMA is the right choice, because when we're consulting on a rural basis, they're having some issues with their elected people within that. So some of the members – Edmonton-Ellerslie – might say: this is the epitome of democracy. Not in my neck of the woods, and that's why Bill 32 is going to help out the folks that put me here.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to speak to the referral motion, that we not read Bill 32 a second time and refer it to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

This may come as a surprise to the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, but when it comes to not all unions being the same and equal, I agree with you, absolutely, because there are some terrible unions out there, absolutely terrible ones.

When I talk, Mr. Speaker, around who was consulted – now, see, I very proudly was a UFCW local 401 member for 26 and a half years. One of the things I never had a problem with when I attended the annual general meetings, that happened every two months, and

we went over the financials for the past two months: I never had a problem with some money being given to leukemia research, something that I know had been going on for over 25 years. The amount of money that 401 had managed to raise and through other kinds of things was substantial to that cause. When I hear about the consultations that happened – of course, during a couple of the speakers I had a chance to go through [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca) looking for that list of people that was consulted with, and I couldn't find it. I couldn't find a link to click on to find out if the largest private-sector union in this province, by the name of UFCW local 401, was consulted. Now, spoiler alert here: I actually already know the answer to this because I called the president myself, personally, and asked.

So how are we here on the opposition benches supposed to expect that good policy is being made when I know consultations weren't done with the largest private-sector union in this province? I'm pretty sure that I wouldn't have seen things like changes to holiday pay just before the holiday itself.

See, Mr. Speaker, I reach back now in my history and what I remember, which is why it's so important that we refer this to the standing committee, because I remember games being played around hours. This was a very, very long time ago, probably, you know, 20 years before I even became an MLA, dealing with this. We had some interesting language that said that if a person works a certain number of hours for 13 consecutive weeks, then a full-time position was deemed to exist. I remember pushing really, really hard and saying: "We have to challenge this. You know, we have to see if we can get some full-time positions," and – surprise, surprise – if the company didn't cut those hours on that individual on that 13th week.

You're telling me that I'm not going to see employers messing around with hours the weeks before holidays so that they can get the lower number? I don't buy that, Mr. Speaker, which is why maybe we should send this to committee, which is what this referral will do, so we can check out and see: does that still continue to be a problem? We could call in the largest private-sector union in this province and ask what they deal with across their multiple different industries that they represent members in.

I've also seen games being played around the open period. Funny enough, the UFCW called out that union for doing that. They tried to say, "That's not it; you're defaming us," and they took them to court and lost. They lost multiple times, actually, because that's exactly what they were doing. They were playing games behind the members' backs and creating deals without the members' input, Mr. Speaker. Just like the member said: all unions aren't equal, and there are some pretty nasty ones out there that I don't think should even be called unions.

5:30

We talk about transparency. I mentioned this earlier, Mr. Speaker, around how I used to attend general meetings every two months. The first order of business, besides the hellos and who was at the table for the meeting that day, was that we would go through the financials for the past two months, but that wasn't just the only opportunity. I think the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie mentioned this around his experience as well, and that was the exact same experience I had. At any moment in time I could call my rep and say: I want to see the financials. The way it was set up, because it was members that made up the union – it's funny.

You know, we're hearing all these references to different leaders and things like that. At the end of the day, the union is the members. It's the members alone; no members, no union. So when I hear disparaging things about unions, really, that's disparaging things about the members because they are the union. And if we get a chance to refer this to committee, Mr. Speaker, as this amendment

will do, we will get a chance to maybe call in some of those members, maybe from the largest private-sector union in Alberta, and hear from the members about their experience with regard to transparency and seeing the financials and finding out what their money is being spent on.

I'm still looking for that list of who we consulted with out there. I'd be grateful to see that. I can't find it on the website. I spent a good 20 minutes looking for that list or looking for a link to that list, and I know what I'm looking for, Mr. Speaker. So I'm just wondering, maybe some of the Albertans that are up in the gallery here today, how hard it's going to be for them to find out where that list is contained. But, I bet you, if we went to committee through this referral motion, we would get a chance to be able to walk Albertans through how they could quickly find that information. I'll have to admit, it took me a moment just to at least find out where it might have been contained.

You know, I always hear – I mean, it's right in the title here, too – about balancing, that this is about bringing back balance. To be quite honest with you, I would have expected balance to just simply repeal everything that the former government did – there; balanced – but at least, as we've heard, good news: they found that there were some good things in that legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, there are some considerable things in here that do not allow for balance, especially around striking. If we get the opportunity to send this to committee, we can get to explore those things in a much broader sense.

I'm glad that, you know, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland had some experience in the labour world with unions. I'm pleased about that, but I'm going to tell you right now that there are members of your caucus that I remember calling unions, like, human traffickers. Look it up in *Hansard*. This is the kind of thing that I'm hearing, and I'm not supposed to take offence to that, coming from labour?

**Ms Hoffman:** Being a worker.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Being a worker. Yeah. That's exactly it, Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Speaker, I was simply a forklift operator where I worked at when I left. I would load trucks, get the ice cream off to the different stores or warehouse. That's what I did each and every single day, but I always knew what was going on in my union. And that was even before I became a shop steward, before I became an activist, before I became a relief rep. Maybe if we could send this to committee with this amendment, we could bring in some of those people that have also had similar opportunities that I had and ask them: do they think there should be, you know, what I like to refer to as an in-case-I-want-to-do-what-I-want clause? But to start allowing exemptions from any part of the legislation?

I remember, Mr. Speaker, when we started changing the labour laws, there was an old piece of legislation in there that said that all a company had to do was apply and they could be exempted from paying a person with disabilities the minimum wage. They could go under that. Now, the good news was that at that time that clause hadn't been used by any single company in the province over the past decade at least, but it was there, and this exemption would allow that.

Let's send it to committee, Mr. Speaker. Let's vote for this amendment, and we can explore those kinds of things. If that really is the case, I'm happy to just sit down and say: "Yeah. Okay. Yup. Fine. You were right." But because I've spent a lot of time – and I was accused just this morning of being too much into the language. Well, for good reason, because that's what I was taught to do by my union. We always seem to come across things where games start to

be played or situations start to develop which put an employee at a really big disadvantage.

My gosh, Mr. Speaker, I remember filing grievances because a member was yelled at by a manager right on the shop floor in front of customers. And you want to tell me that unions had too much power?

**An Hon. Member:** Did he deserve it?

**Mr. Nielsen:** These are things that we'll be able to discover through the committee and this referral amendment, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** He said: did he deserve it?

**Mr. Nielsen:** He said – wow. That's actually unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that there's that sentiment. That's right up there with, "Well, maybe unions are human traffickers," or when you're organizing a potential work site – I remember being accused of forcing my way into homes and intimidating people to sign the union card or else. I certainly don't know what kind of organizing drives those members were part of, but it wasn't anything that I was ever part of.

Let's call them in through the committee, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk to those people that do that organizing through this referral amendment. We'll get a chance to find out if all the things that are contained within Bill 32 really bring balance back to the workplace. Or was it like when I was speaking earlier, before the amendment, that it's akin to me trying to balance standing on the side of the north face of Mount Everest?

We have an opportunity here, Mr. Speaker. By using this amendment, sending this to committee, we'll get an opportunity to hear from the people that this actually affects. We'll see how many say: "Yeah. I totally want to see my holiday pay at the lesser end. I totally want to see my overtime diminished." Now, I've always said, though, that when it comes to overtime – I've said it to my members. I've said it to members I've overseen in my duties as a relief rep: you can never, ever count on overtime. It's here today, gone tomorrow. There's nothing that says that an employer has to guarantee that. But they should be paid for their time away from their family. That's all the kind of stuff that we get to see through this amendment and sending it to committee and being able to find out.

5:40

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I had a job at 13 years old. I maybe even had two at the same time when I was 13. I was fortunate enough to not be in a position where my family expected me to be able to provide for the family well-being or for the family to be able to have its ends met, but I definitely learned a lot and was happy to be able to contribute. My mom, to this day, will quote me as saying: cleaning bathrooms isn't bad when you're getting paid to do it; it's sure a lot more fun than doing it when you're at home.

I want to ask the member, who has highlighted some of his extensive background in UFCW, about the kinds of training that are done for new workers, particularly for young workers. Working in a warehouse, operating a forklift: I don't imagine that anyone would recommend that being work that 13-year-olds should do, but, also, I was hoping that he could maybe elaborate on some other reasons why he thinks it's important for us to have protections and safeguards for young people who are learning. I don't think anyone

would expect a 13- or 14-year-old to have the same skill set or abilities – or the other piece is the comfort to be able to refuse unsafe work. I think that's one thing that my encounters with many worker organizations – they teach people about your right to say no. I definitely know that a lot of 13-year-olds don't feel that they have the ability to say no when they're in their first job. I understand why; I definitely didn't feel like I could say no. Fortunately, I wasn't put in a position where I felt like I was doing unsafe work, but I know that there are times where people are.

There was a speaker previously who said: there's never been an employer who didn't respect workplace safety and laws. I want to say that that's categorically untrue. I think the vast majority are very good employers in this province and elsewhere, but there are times where workers haven't been protected and where there have been devastating impacts. Every year we remember the people who were injured and, specifically, who died on work sites.

I'm hoping that the member could maybe elaborate a little bit on some of those topics I just raised. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Glenora asking that. Yes. As somebody at my work site who was responsible for teaching the safe operation of power jacks and of forklifts, I have to admit, it was hard enough to teach adults to do that kind of safe work. There was an entire program, which I had helped design at that time, around the safe operation for that.

You know, I've always said: would a majority of employers respect that? I believe they would. Absolutely. But, again, it's not the majority that I'm ever worried about; it's the one that I'm worried about, where a 13-year-old gets on a forklift and unfortunately rolls it and they're killed because of that. I have to ask: what kind of training went through for that to be the end cause? I mean, I even remember a youth at a lumberyard, I believe it was, that was also involved in a forklift accident, and it killed them. Again, what was the safety training around that? It's so important. I remember that the very first thing that an employee got when they arrived at Lucerne was their safety training about the entire plant in general, and until they passed that, they weren't going on the shop floor.

I guess around your question about unsafe work, Mr. Speaker, I can remember some of the employees at my work site who had been there for 10 years and were afraid to challenge management on anything, let alone unsafe work. Yet we're going to put a 13- or 14-year-old potentially in a position where they're going to have to challenge an adult that's in a position of power around whether something may or may not be unsafe? Yes, I certainly had my little bits of jobs when I was 13 or 14 years old, but I never found myself in a position of having to challenge that. Actually, it was my parents that said, "You know, you can maybe go cut some grass after I teach you how to properly work the lawnmower" and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here that we need to explore, and we really need to take advantage of it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, anyone else wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bufferalo has risen.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour I'll keep my comments short. I too will be supporting the referral that has been put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie with regard to not reading this bill for a second time in second reading but to look at broadly consulting.

You know, I had the opportunity, as I was sitting in the back listening to the minister speak to a 29(2)(a) response, and the

minister – and I certainly didn't take down everything he said, but he did say that the consultation that occurred before this specific Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, took place pre-COVID. I imagine that's somewhere around the end of last year or beginning of this year, January-February. He spoke to a synopsis being on the ministry's website that a number of stakeholders had given feedback to. That's all well and good, Mr. Speaker.

The pre-COVID consultation is something that's gone on for a number of bills. We've had about 34 presented to us, and a number of them had long consultations that occurred before the March lockdown in this province. What we know now and since March is that the public's attention is very much on other things, you know, their own situations with regard to their family's security, their own situations with regard to work, endeavouring to try and see if there's government support from an order of government to get them through these very different times, where many have lost their jobs. What I'm trying to say is that people's attention isn't on today's work of this Legislature generally. Bill 32 is taking place in a situation where people are focused on other things.

I just wanted to kind of use that as my reason for saying, Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill 1, a bill that was introduced for first reading on February 25 in this House and was given royal assent on June 17 – you know, my opinion of the public's attention to Bill 1 was that it wasn't there. There are a number of things that are really important in Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, in terms of how people exhibit their opposition and protest with regard to government action in particular and the actions of – government action. I'll leave it at that.

You know, I went to a rally a couple weeks ago, and it seemed like the horse was out of the barn, Mr. Speaker. The bill had already been passed on June 17 and given royal assent on that date, but people were just starting two weeks ago to look at the implications of Bill 1, and there were rallies and protests in our two largest cities with regard to Bill 1. The kind of action people were asking for at that point – and it had already been given royal assent – was that the Lieutenant Governor rescind royal assent or not give it, but she had already given it. I was able to speak with many people, saying: "Bill 1, really, you're too late on that. You can express your dissatisfaction with your MLA and elected representatives generally, other MLAs, but that bill is passed."

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not passed, and there are many, many Albertans, whether they be unionized workers, whether they be workers in the private sector, whether they be employers of small or medium or large-sized enterprises, that probably don't know what's in Bill 32. As you know, it amends and touches six different acts and statutes and orders, and it is far-reaching in its approach.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, the reasonable request of the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie that this bill go before a committee so that all sorts of Albertans can attend and speak to committee, if this House approves, would be what I would wish. I certainly don't, you know, come at it from that unions are the only people who are impacted here or unionized workers. I've worked in both the private sector and the public sector, in unionized environments and in non-unionized environments, and I feel like I was treated well and was able to achieve my career goals in both of those environments. So I don't come at it that one is better than another; I come at it from knowing that the public have not had the focus on this issue, and it is far-reaching, as some of my colleagues have been speaking to, with regard to implications that are in the various amendments to the six different statutes, bills, and orders that are here.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that, like my colleagues, I have concerns with many parts of this bill, and I believe it is important for us to really dig in to a rather substantial bill that's before us. We, of course, during the labour legislation revisions – I was part of the government that initiated them, and the minister that initiated them on government's behalf did a lot of updating of statutes that hadn't been touched in a very long time, and I'm glad to hear that the changes that we initiated in those years, some of them, are going to be kept because I think they're very worthwhile.

My colleague from Calgary-McCall said it well last week, Mr. Speaker, when he spoke to the title here of restoring balance. He said that in a work situation balance is always on the side of the employer. The employers are in a power situation that's different from the employees, and that will never change. So to see the title of this bill, which I think people would want to weigh in on as well, is somewhat troubling and disturbing because, as we know, the situation in society with workers, with employers is that there is a difference in the tipping of the scales towards the employer side. As my colleagues have so eloquently tried to say, that's the reason why unions came into being – and this is hundreds of years ago in the 1800s – because of the imbalance of power. Frankly, it was in many cases a dangerous place for employees to be, the workplace. Many unions got their start protecting workers so that they would have decent conditions.

We are in a place, of course, where with COVID times the conditions are so, so radically changed for employers and employees. It's not simple or easy for any of us, particularly if you're in a situation that you're concerned about your safety.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to see this go to committee, to see this discussed with all sorts of stakeholders would be beneficial for this bill, and perhaps amendments could be suggested in that situation that could come back here to the House to get implemented or put forward. Wouldn't that be a really positive thing for all of us to be doing, to take the views of people who are in challenging work situations and see if Bill 32 meets their needs with regard to conditions in the workplace that may go on for several months or, in fact, years? I think the Kill Bill 1 rallies are a good example of why people in Alberta – you know, they didn't kind of come onto and understand what was in Bill 1, Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, until it was far too late.

With regard to my support of the Edmonton-Ellerslie member's recommendation to refer this to a committee for further discussion, that's what I think is probably necessary, that it not be now read a second time, and wait until we have that matter fully canvassed with stakeholders, independent people, unions, employers, all of those people who can publicly put their views on the record notwithstanding that there's a synopsis of some stakeholders' views in a consultation that occurred many, many months ago in a very different situation.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to my views, I think I've fully canvassed them, and I would hope that members would agree to the situation that I've laid out with regard to this situation.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will be brief in view of the time as well. I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo summarized it very well, where you can look at the letter of the law or the potential law that this Bill 32 might represent, but when we make legislation and we build legislation here in this Chamber, we also have to reflect what's going on in the larger

society which we represent. Certainly, we know that this is an unprecedented time economically and with the medical emergency, too. I think that everybody is conscious of that, and we have to nurture that common purpose by what we do in this House, right? During an economic downturn and COVID and there's a lot of anxiety and so forth, if we pick fights and do not seek to look for a common purpose, then you're only exacerbating what is already a very difficult problem for everybody, not just workers and employers and the economy but literally everyone in the province right now.

I mean, the tension is palpable. I saw it – this weekend I had a chance to go to central Alberta, to Dry Island park and to Tolman and Trochu, Alberta. I was thinking about you. It's nice there, but, you know, you can feel the economic problems there, and you can feel the tension around what's going on.

**Ms Hoffman:** So many places. You weren't thinking about him.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. I always think about the member of where I'm in, any given MLA of where I happen to be travelling.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, that we need to build and nurture confidence through the bills that we make, and Bill 32 doesn't do that, right? It puts people on edge, for good reason. It oversteps what is the sort of natural place where our economy is at this point in time, and it creates a lot of uncertainty, not just for workers but for the whole economy in general. I spoke about this the other night, but it's true, you know. Certainly, it's a conservative magazine if anything, but *The Economist* will do a study of any jurisdiction and talk about stability as being one of the number one investment features of how to rate any given province or state or country. If you create instability through legislation, then you're not . . .

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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