



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, July 22, 2020

Day 49

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

### The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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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  
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Dach  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 22, 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 interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

### Statement by the Speaker

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

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, last week I read an initial tribute to a former member who passed away, Mr. Robert C. Clark. His family has joined us this afternoon, and we will pay tribute to his service.

Mr. Clark was elected as a Social Credit Member for Didsbury in a by-election in 1960. He was re-elected in the 1963 general election for Olds-Didsbury and served that constituency until 1981. During his 21 years of service as an MLA he served as the minister of youth, the Minister of Education, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Opposition House Leader as well as on numerous committees.

Mr. Clark was Alberta's first Information and Privacy Commissioner for six years and Alberta's first Ethics Commissioner for 11 years.

Some of the many honours bestowed upon Mr. Clark include the Lieutenant Governor's award for excellence in public service, the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee, and an annual award that has been named in his honour by the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta.

He's been inducted into the Alberta sports hall of fame and the Alberta Hockey Hall of Fame.

Mr. Clark passed away at the age of 83.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Clark as each of you may have known him.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Clark family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name. Mr. Clark's wife, Norma Clark; their son Dean Clark and his partner, Kerry Lowe; daughter and son-in-law Donna and Mike Van Tetering; grandson James Clark; close friends Shawn and Shannon Frenette and, also well known to this building, Mr. Tom and Marg Forgrave. Please rise and receive the warm welcome and appreciation of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Hon. members, also in the gallery today are guests of the Minister of Indigenous Relations: his niece Jolin Kopp and her son Chaz Kopp.

Also in the gallery today are a number of guests visiting the Member for Calgary-Falconridge. Welcome to the Assembly the family of Mr. and Mrs. Sidhu.

Hon. members, please welcome all of our guests to the Assembly.

## Ministerial Statements

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

### Mr. Robert Curtis Clark

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise to mark the passing of my late friend Bob Clark and to honour his legacy of public service for the province of Alberta. Let me begin with condolences to his family; to his wife, Norma, and children Dean and Donna. Norma and Donna and Donna's family still live in Carstairs, the Clark's home for many decades, where Norma is still an avid golfer and curler. Bob Clark was truly a legendary Albertan and a legendary figure in our province's politics. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, a throwback to a more traditional time where character, civility, and decency were the primary measures of a man's stature in his community, and few measured up to that standard as much as Bob Clark.

Bob was born on July 2, 1937, in Acme, 80 kilometres north of Calgary, the first village incorporated in Kneehill county. It was founded in 1910, a year after the CPR arrived and gave the village its name, Acme, after the Greek word for highest point, since Acme was, at that point, the northernmost stop on the rail network. That village has produced more than its share of great Albertans. Our first female Lieutenant Governor, Helen Hunley, a predecessor of my friend the hon. the Government House Leader, was born there, as was my friend former provincial Minister Connie Osterman, who was born in Acme a year before Bob.

Bob's father, Curtis, was the son of Roy Clark, who immigrated to Alberta from Illinois in 1906, a very typical story of settlement to that part of central Alberta, with Midwestern-American farmers moving north to better opportunity north of the 49th parallel. Curtis recounts some of the family history in the local history book *Acme Memories*, including their experiences of the dust bowl and the Depression of the '30s, like hauling milk from their dairy farm near Acme to Linden in a Bennett buggy. Those stories shed light on where Bob came from and why he grew up to be so successful.

He became a teacher at 19, first at Hainstock school west of Olds in Mountain View county, in 1956, where he taught for two years, followed by two years at Sundre school. He must have known our late friend Myron Thompson. He had only one year of university although he got an honorary doctorate of laws from the University of Calgary much later in life. Bob also got to know a lot of people through teaching, but he was also known throughout the district as an outstanding baseball player. These connections and profile in the community helped to launch his young political career.

After incumbent Didsbury Social Credit MLA James Owens passed away of a heart attack in 1960, Bob was invited to seek the nomination to replace him. He won that by-election with over 53 per cent of the vote – not quite up to your standards, Mr. Speaker, but impressive nevertheless – which was down almost 20 points from Owens' last victory but still, as I say, pretty good. Bob was only 23 and at the time was the youngest elected politician in the entire British Commonwealth. It was the beginning of a 21-year career in electoral politics, one that in many ways mirrored the career of another Alberta political legend, Bob's lifetime friend and colleague and my friend, Ray Speaker.

Ray was born in 1935 in Enchant, Alberta. He graduated from the U of A and, like Clark, became a teacher and, almost like Clark, got elected as a Socred MLA while in his 20s. Ray recalls that the two of them spent a lot of time together driving to political and government events all over the province. On one occasion Ray tells

me that when they came upon a big smokestack just outside Carstairs, Bob remarked that, quote, the next big issue is going to be pollution and the environment. Unquote. Well, Clark pursued that insight as a member of Premier Ernest Manning's caucus and cabinet and was instrumental in the 1971 creation of the Alberta department of the environment by the then Social Credit government. It was one of the first if not the first environment departments in the Dominion. Decades later, I should add, Bob would serve on the board and eventually chair the Alberta Special Waste Management corporation, always maintaining his passion for environmental protection.

In the 1963 election, Bob's first bid for re-election, he won a whopping 67 per cent of the vote in the renamed riding of Olds-Didsbury. A beautiful young woman named Norma Jean Holmes saw great promise in the local MLA, so she married him, and thus began a 56-year partnership that produced Dean and Donna plus six grandchildren, I understand, and two great-grandchildren. Premier Manning appointed Bob minister of youth in 1966. In the provincial election the following year he won another landslide victory in Olds-Didsbury, and the year after that, a new Premier, Harry Strom, made him the Minister of Education.

#### 1:40

According to Ray Speaker, Bob was a fervent believer in the principle that the best government is that which is closest to the people that it serves. That's why, as Education minister, Clark pushed for more local control by local boards and superintendents and backed legislative changes giving them more autonomy.

When the Socred dynasty finally gave way to the new PC government under Premier Lougheed in the 1971 election, Bob easily held on to Olds-Didsbury, and he did so again in '75, even as the Lougheed machine reduced the once mighty Socreds to only four seats. But Bob then took over the leadership of the Social Credit Party and became Leader of the Official Opposition. Under his leadership the party boosted its share of the popular vote in the 1979 election, and he won Olds-Didsbury with his largest margin ever. But the party remained stuck with just four seats held by Clark, Ray Speaker, Walter Buck, and Fred Mandeville, all great characters. Bob finally stepped down in 1982. Buck and Speaker became Independents, and when Mandeville resigned later that year, he was the last Socred to sit in this place.

Bob's departure came at the height of Alberta's battle with Pierre Trudeau over his national energy program, and the by-election to replace him in Olds-Didsbury was won, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, by the Western Canada Concept separatist candidate, Gordon Kesler. I'm informed by Your Honour that things have calmed down, at least a little bit, in Olds-Didsbury since then but not completely. Norma says that Bob was glad to see that because he was always, God bless him, a Canadian patriot.

Ray Speaker says that Bob won six elections because he was a great constituency man. He kept in touch with local needs and delivered schools, roads, health care facilities; he was always a helping hand.

He left politics but not public service. He was appointed Alberta's first Ethics Commissioner in 1992, serving for over a decade, and he also served as our first Information and Privacy Commissioner for six years. In 2002 he was appointed chair of the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission and in 2003 was honoured by the hon. the Lieutenant Governor with the award for his dedication to public service. He also served as ethics adviser for the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. The thing that all of these postings have in common is that they required impeccable honesty, the highest ethical standards, and scrupulous nonpartisan fairness. Bob Clark exemplified all of these qualities in spades.

A touching tribute to Bob's life of service appeared July 14 in the *Mountain View Albertan*. It was written by the *Albertan's* publisher and long-time Clark friend, Murray Elliott, who notes that Clark's many local community contributions included serving the Olds College board of governors as chair for three terms. He was also former general manager and president of the Olds Grizzlys and led the Alberta Junior Hockey League to the Centennial Cup junior A hockey championships in 1994. He chaired the league as well. He was honoured by the Grizzlys this February with a banner, with his name and picture on it, lifted to the rafters at the Olds Sports Complex.

Clark was named to the class of 2020 for the Alberta Hockey Hall of Fame along with former Canadian national women's team captain Cassie Campbell-Pascall and retired NHLers Jamie Macoun, John Davidson, Dr. Randy Gregg, and the great coach Ken Hitchcock. Interviewed about it by the local 96.5 radio station in January, Clark recalled with typical humility, quote: I'm the luckiest of all of them because I got to watch all of them perform, and none of them had to watch what a poor goalie I was in high school in Carstairs a long time back.

Let me close by quoting Mr. Elliott again about the Carstairs library, that bears Bob's name. He said: "Bob Clark had so many desirable attributes – he was decent, sincere, honest and respected. When asked, he gave his time without question or delay. Glory and fame were never his motivators. Let's hope, during these polarized . . . volatile times, our leaders can begin to emulate the qualities of such a fine man."

I couldn't say it any better. Our province is a better place because of Bob Clark, and he'll be missed by all who knew him.

There will be a service, I understand, Mr. Speaker, this Saturday in Carstairs, which I hope to attend. It's limited to 100 people because of the pandemic. There would have been many more people otherwise, and I understand that the family is hoping to do a full celebration later this year.

In closing, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I have no doubt that the Master to whom he was personally devoted will say: well done, good and faithful servant. May he rest in peace, and may light perpetual shine upon him.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to respond.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I join in the comments that were made by the hon. Premier with respect to the passing of Bob Clark. I'd like to offer a few comments to the family as well. I had the opportunity and privilege of knowing Bob during my time as Minister of Advanced Education. He was the chair of the board of governors at Olds College, so we met on a number of occasions. Just to share a personal story, on my first visit to Olds College he kindly took me out to dinner. We had a steak sandwich in the restaurant in the hotel that was run by Olds College at the time, and he told me many fascinating stories about politics and history in Alberta. It was actually through him that I learned about the 1948 electricity referendum that was held in Alberta. I wouldn't have known that otherwise. He was very knowledgeable.

And even though I suspect he probably never would have voted for me if he had had the chance, he was still kind enough to offer some advice. I was set to address the Olds chamber of commerce the next day, not exactly friendly territory for a New Democrat MLA, and I asked him what I could expect before I walked into that room. He thought for a minute, and he said: it'll be quiet. And he was right, Mr. Speaker. He always offered me very sound advice in his role as board chair and in my role as minister, and I think that I was a better minister because of the advice that I got from him.

I know that he was very proud of his family. At that very same dinner, Mr. Speaker, we had the honour of being served by his granddaughter, and he beamed with a great deal of pride to point out that that was his granddaughter who was serving us.

In addition to the things that the Premier highlighted about his career, I want to highlight one thing that I believe deserves emphasis. The final days of the Social Credit government here in Alberta saw a massive expansion of the postsecondary sector. We saw the creation of the University of Calgary, the creation of the University of Lethbridge, the creation of Athabasca University, Alberta Vocational College, NAIT. I think it was the most significant expansion of postsecondary education in any province in the history of Canada, and Bob Clark was either there at the birth of those institutions or was tasked with the successful operation of those institutions. The creation of those institutions has paid dividends for decades since they were created.

It's my suggestion to all members of the Chamber that if we want to honour Bob's legacy, we continue to advocate for a strong postsecondary education system here in Alberta so that future generations can be as successful as those who have come before us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May I offer my condolences again to the family, and may Bob Clark rest in peace.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, if I might just add my own personal thank yous to the Chamber for allowing us to pay such tribute to a man who was a personal mentor of mine, a friend, a statesman, and one hell of an Albertan. Hear, hear.

### Oral Question Period

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

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to reopening our schools, let's start with where the Premier and I agree: it's good for our kids, both their education and their mental health, and it is fundamentally important for our economy. However, black-and-white common sense will also tell us that meaningful adherence to the CMO's safety rules will cost money. We cannot safely reopen schools without real investments in reducing class sizes, creating more physical space, and hiring more staff. To the Premier: why will he not admit that his plan to currently try and do more with less is going to fail our kids and hurt our recovery?

1:50

**Mr. Kenney:** Because that's not the plan, Mr. Speaker. Alberta school boards will be receiving an increase in funding of \$120 million this year, in addition to which, as part of Alberta's recovery plan, the government is investing nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in capital maintenance and repair for our schools, including things like creating touchless sinks, toilets, and doors to reduce high-touch areas, in addition to which I would point out that Alberta school boards cumulatively hold well over \$300 million in reserves for a rainy day, and the Minister of Education is releasing them to use those for this rainy day.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that it's been raining for school boards since April 2019, and the Premier, quite frankly, should lay off the talking points so we can talk meaningfully about what is really best for our kids. At a time when we're dealing with a pandemic, you are spending less money per student than we were

in 2018. Less, not more. Properly adopting the necessary health precautions is not a cost-free exercise, and pretending otherwise puts Alberta children at risk. Will the Premier reverse his decision to put zero additional operating funds towards keeping our kids healthy and safe?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, \$120 million may be a talking point to the NDP. It's real money for taxpayers. A quarter of a billion dollars on capital maintenance and repair to upgrade the schools may be a talking point for the NDP, but it's real money for taxpayers. Over \$30 million in reserves held by school boards to address any potential cost pressures may be a talking point to the NDP. It's real money for taxpayers.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, adding a bit of money after you've cut a lot of money does not fix the problems, and here's the thing. Albertans don't believe what this Premier is saying. Quote: all my classes are above 30 kids; without adequate funding we cannot adequately run a safe environment. Quote: "No PPE, no extra funding, and no class size cap. Teachers are not babysitters. You are doing nothing to keep Alberta safe." Quote: how can you expect schools to be safe when you're not funding them properly even pre-pandemic? Premier, you should recognize these comments from Albertans because they're from your Facebook page. Why won't you listen to your own supporters?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, news flash: you know, NDP supporters and special-interest group activists also post on my Facebook page. I will point out to the member opposite that the NDP could never squeeze taxpayers enough. Our schools are at the highest level of funding in the history of our province. They are the highest per capita funding across the country. Additional funds are being made available, both capital, operational, and through reserves. But the most important thing is that this reopening plan for the schools was developed in close co-operation with school boards, superintendents, principals, and others; 86 per cent of parents want it to happen.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think pretty much every Alberta parent would disagree with the notion that keeping their kids safe is, quote, squeezing taxpayers.

Now, the Premier claimed that his plan to reopen schools is based on national and international success stories. As usual, with a little research the half-truths and intentional omissions add up pretty fast. Let's start with Calgary Catholic, which, we agree, ran a successful summer program. One measure the Premier didn't mention, though, about Calgary Catholic was that they limited their class sizes to just 14 children. If this Premier is actually inspired by Calgary Catholic, why is there no class size limit for the rest of Alberta kids?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we have closely followed the successful precedents of jurisdictions around the world that have either continued operating schools or reopened them throughout the pandemic period. I would point, for example, to Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong, all of whom had the schools continuing to operate at full capacity, generally with higher levels of density than here in Alberta, with no marked outbreak in their schools or their societies. It's unfortunate that the NDP is trying to scare parents. What we're trying to do is to ensure the safe reopening of the schools. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West will come to order.

**Ms Notley:** Let me be absolutely clear, Mr. Speaker. We are not trying to scare parents; we are trying to protect them and their families. Absolutely.

Now, the Premier said that he looked at other provinces, but in Ontario class sizes are being capped at 15 children. He mentioned B.C., but what he forgot to mention was that they reopened schools on a part-time basis, on a voluntary basis, with alternating class days. Only 50 per cent of K to 5 students were in school at a given time, and that number dropped to 20 per cent for grades 6 to 12. Why is this government misleading Albertans while refusing to actually adopt B.C.'s strategies for success?

**Mr. Kenney:** We're doing no such thing, Mr. Speaker. We're pointing to epidemiological data that demonstrates that children have a very low propensity to be infected by the virus and, if they are, have an even lower chance of exhibiting serious symptoms and a very low chance of transmitting the virus to others. That's the evidence in Hong Kong... [interjections] Boy, it's very unfortunate that they're heckling and so disrespectful of this place. But it's true of Hong Kong, of Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea. It's true of Denmark. It's true of the Netherlands. It's true of jurisdictions all around the world. It'll be true of Alberta as well.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true that teenagers actually transmit the disease. That's what the evidence says. In Calgary alone over half of our high schools are at over 100 per cent capacity.

Now, the Premier also cited European examples of success. Here again we didn't get the whole truth. Denmark split its classes into groups of just 12 kids. Denmark teaches classes outside. Denmark classrooms have two teachers. Now, Premier, if you're going to steal good ideas from the socialists in Denmark, at least take the best ones. Will the Premier admit that in order to be as successful as Denmark, he is actually going to have to limit class sizes and hire more staff?

**Mr. Kenney:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that in jurisdictions around the world – I pointed to the countries with the best performance in COVID-19 on the face of the Earth. Those four Asian jurisdictions which have maintained – they never shut down the schools. They never shut down the schools. They followed common-sense public health guidelines. We expect superintendents, principals, school boards, and local schools to do the same. We have consulted broadly; 86 per cent of parents want the schools reopened. We know the NDP disagrees. We recall that their boss, Gil McGowan, wanted us to keep the economy shut down for months to come. Thankfully, we're not listening to that. We're listening to Alberta parents.

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

**Ms Hoffman:**

My mom has had asthma my whole life. I have had to separate from her when there were [wildfires] and heavy smoke, and I don't want to leave her again... Now at almost 18, I might have to make the decision to leave home and finish my last year of high school away from her.

Mr. Speaker, that's from Alexandria Fortin, a grade 12 student in Lacombe high school. She joined me today to speak out against this government's risky, unfunded school reopening plan. To the Premier: what's your advice to Alexandria, abandon her mom or abandon her high school diploma?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My advice would be neither, as a mother, as a grandmother, as a mother of an educational assistant. We have developed a very comprehensive plan that I can say will instill confidence in all Albertans that we will be able to bring back our students within the health guidelines that have been developed in consultation with Dr. Deena Hinshaw and her team and all our education partners.

From Calgary Catholic's chief superintendent: I think, overall, people are going to be really pleased with the announcement from the ministry and the government that we've heard today.

**Ms Hoffman:** The government thinks that teachers are now doctors and cleaning specialists and, frankly, magicians if they think that overcrowded classrooms are going to allow for the physical distancing that Dr. Hinshaw recommends. Carmyn Effa of Lillian Osborne high school says: "I love my job and I miss my students – but without investing time and money to devise a safe back to school strategy, this fall will be a disaster. [I'm] not fear-mongering to say my [work] conditions will be... unsafe." To the Premier: why do you have \$4.7 billion for a handout to profitable corporations but not a dime to help keep Carmyn, her students, or their families safe?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have developed a very comprehensive plan that will bring students back and staff back safely under positive conditions. Every school authority in this province will be receiving an increase in funding, \$120 million more. We have added the capital infrastructure maintenance and renewal stimulus funding – another \$250 million more, \$15 million of which is being utilized for COVID-related items within schools – \$363 million in school board reserves that they have access to and...

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

**Ms Hoffman:** John Vradenburgh, a custodian and president for CUPE local 474 who's worked in Alberta schools for over 25 years, a hard-working front-line man, says: "It is unreasonable, unless you're the Flash or Superman, to expect Custodial staff to do 'more' cleaning. Schools are staffed at a level that provides for basic or much less, cleaning now." We all know that safety during the COVID-19 pandemic means that we have to clean more. We need to have more people to do that and more funds. Why is the Premier more interested in giving more money to profitable corporations, \$4.7 billion, instead of cleaning up...

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

2:00

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our comprehensive plan includes guidelines developed with and approved by Alberta's chief medical officer of health. It is extremely, extremely disappointing to have the NDP continue to discredit her expertise and her advice and instead spread misinformation with the sole goal of creating fear among the public. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The House will come to order because the hon. Minister of Education is answering a question.

**Member LaGrange:** Bevan Daverne, president of CASS, the College of Alberta School Superintendents – and I'm quoting him – strongly believes that the re-entry plan offers the appropriate



balance of guidance from the chief medical officer of health and the government while providing for the authority and autonomy of individual school divisions to assure their students, parents, and staff that there is a successful return . . .

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

### Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, the hailstorm in June was the fourth-costliest natural disaster in Canadian history. Today we are joined in the gallery by many of those impacted by this disaster, who came all this way to call on this government for action. Support to date has been a joke. It doesn't cover hail damage. Premier, the June 13 storm was a hailstorm. Shouldn't you provide actual funding to repair hail damage? And before you make excuses, keep in mind that the people impacted by this storm are here watching.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans were impacted by over a dozen major hailstorms during the previous government, under the NDP, which refused to declare any of them a disaster, to provide any support of any kind to the homeowners or their residences. We have, based on the scientific advice of the emergency management authorities, declared that particular hailstorm in Calgary and Airdrie to be a disaster. Monies are flowing to the city. As is the normal approach to this, people who suffered over-the-surface flooding damage that is uninsurable will receive direct compensation from the province. We're handling this with the same alacrity we would in any other similar disaster.

**Mr. Sabir:** Premier, it's the fourth-costliest natural disaster, in the midst of a pandemic and a standstill economy.

Today the Leader of the Official Opposition and I wrote to the Premier asking him to commit to support those impacted by this hailstorm. These requests are fairly simple, asking to cover the gap between your program and actual damage and advocacy for fair coverage. Premier, will you commit now to these simple requests, or do you actually believe you have done enough?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is shameful but entirely predictable that the opposition is seeking to politically exploit a disaster when they refused ever to declare a hailstorm as a disaster. They floated zero support to hailstorm victims in the past. We are pursuing this. We declared it an emergency. We are working with the municipality, and we are waiting for the municipality to submit their estimate of uninsurable damages. We will respond with generosity, in the appropriate way, in addition to the insurance companies, who, I understand, are providing \$1.2 billion in payments to some 70,000 claimants.

**Mr. Sabir:** I think, Premier, it's my job to stand up for people, and it's not shameful. I'm doing my job.

Yesterday the hailstorm action committee said in a release – and I quote – that they are fed up waiting for a response from the Premier. End quote. Premier, you were able to find \$4.7 billion for a corporate handout, and you're refusing to support hail-affected Calgarians. Premier, why do wealthy CEO friends of yours get billions in giveaways and my constituents and basically the entire northeast Calgary get nothing? Why, Premier?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is no such thing as a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. The member knows that. But they continue to completely fabricate things.

Mr. Speaker, I want that member to stand up and tell us why the tens of thousands of Albertans who encountered major hail damage under the NDP government received not one cent of support, unlike this government, which, through its declaration of a disaster, is providing support as defined by the local municipal government. We'll continue to work with Calgary to provide that support.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has a question.

### Economic Recovery and Job Creation

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month our Premier announced Alberta's plan for economic recovery and outlined how Alberta plans to be more competitive in global markets for not only oil and gas but also developing industries in our province. A key piece of that plan for becoming more competitive and economically diverse is the lowering of the corporate tax rate. To the Minister of Finance: how is speeding up the job-creation tax cut going to entice corporations to come to Alberta and invest in Calgary, Edmonton, and the rest of our province?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The acceleration of the job-creation tax cut sends a strong signal to investors in Canada and around the world that Alberta is open for business. Companies investing and creating jobs in Alberta will benefit from the most competitive tax environment, business environment in the country, and we'll be better than the vast majority of U.S. states. As businesses around the world work to recover from COVID-19 and assess their operations, they can be confident that Alberta will be the place and the choice in location to invest.

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

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the innovation employment grant will attract new investment to Alberta's growing tech industry and given that our government's economic recovery strategy is economic diversification, bringing tech companies to Alberta, and attracting investors and corporations from other places like Houston, Toronto, and Montreal, to the same minister: can you please inform this House on why the innovation employment grant will attract new companies to Alberta and the benefits our province will see as a result?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The innovation employment grant is unique in Canada and offers companies benefits they won't find anywhere else. Alberta's 20 per cent incremental grant is significantly more attractive than the research and development grants found in other provinces. Companies that are in the pre-income and scale-up phases will initially benefit from the IEG, but as they become more profitable and are phased out of the program, they will benefit from Alberta's preferential business rate. These two initiatives will work well together to support the growth in businesses of all sizes and in every phase.

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

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my riding of Calgary-Currie has many tech start-ups – they're creating everything from an app that transfers encrypted medical patient data

to an app that brings the world together through karaoke – and given that our government introduced the innovation employment grant and an additional \$175 million to help diversify our economy, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: how will tech start-ups access the innovation employment grant and the \$175 million for start-up projects?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Recapitalizing the Alberta Enterprise Corporation will potentially create as many as 4,000 jobs and contribute up to \$290 million to our province's GDP. Access to capital is the largest barrier that our early-stage tech companies face, and by providing more funding to the AEC, we are ensuring that as much as 70 per cent of the total need for start-up capital is going to be available for our tech start-ups. Rather than the ineffective NDP programs, we are making Alberta the best place to invest in tech and innovation.

### School Re-entry Plan and Students with Special Needs

**Ms Renaud:** As schools relaunch, we all want children and staff to be safe, but this government is spending more time passing the buck to school boards than funding them. Students with disabilities will require support and resources to ensure that they can return to school safely, but the Premier and the Minister of Education failed to even mention them during their press conference or in their media release or even their re-entry documents. To the Minister of Education: what specific supports will be there to support disabled students when you reopen schools? Did you forget them? Did you just not say? Please let us know.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Of course, our concern is always around our students, the safe re-entry of all our students, including our special-needs students. School boards will be looking at those particular students and providing the resources that they need, the extra supports that they need. But, again, we have a very strong, comprehensive, detailed plan to ensure that when those students come back, their parents can feel confident that they will be in a safe environment. That is the first and foremost thing that the parents want to know, that their children will be coming back in a safe environment, and that's what we're providing.

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government has bragged about how simple and not onerous it is to reduce supports for Albertans with disabilities and given that students with special needs require more support and resources, like, for example, the 20,000 educational assistants that this minister summarily fired over the summer, can the Minister of Education tell this House: how many students with special needs will go without their EAs or other supports because her Premier is looking to save a buck at the expense of our children during a pandemic? Do you have a specific number of students impacted, and should parents be forced to keep their kids home because you refuse to do what is required to keep them safe?

2:10

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I totally disregard the premise of that question. That's ludicrous. I'm shocked that they would even bring something forward such as that. As I said earlier,

every single school division in this province will have an increase in their funding. They have the ability to use those resources appropriately. If they're not spending them on the supports that children need, the question needs to be asked of our school divisions: why are you not supporting our students?

**Ms Renaud:** Given that this government announced half a plan, six weeks before schools reopened, that doesn't even include the word "disability" and given that these students can contract and spread COVID, just like everyone else, and given that some of these students are immunocompromised, meaning that they are more likely to have severe outcomes if they contract the infection, to the minister: given all of this, given your lack of action, and given that some families have already seen cuts to special-needs funding of 80 per cent from your government, will you announce new funding here and now to support students with severe disabilities during COVID? A simple question. Put down the happy . . .

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The plan that was developed in consultation with all the school boards, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the parents, the superintendents, all the administrators: this plan was developed on the advice of our chief medical officer, and it has guidelines in place to protect all of our students, including our special-needs students. It's a comprehensive plan. I am extremely disappointed, as I said earlier – and I will continue to say it – that they try to discredit the good work that has been done by our chief medical officer. We will take the advice of our chief medical officer regarding our students.

### School Re-entry Plan and Women's Workforce Participation

**Member Irwin:** The results are in. Alberta teachers are giving this UCP school reopening plan a failing grade. With no cap on class sizes and no additional funding to implement new safety measures, teachers are saying that the Minister of Education has done nothing to keep them and their students safe. The failure of school reopening will be borne mostly by women. Women's role in the economic recovery depends on the safe reopening of schools and child care spaces in our province. To the Minister of Education: are you prepared to force women to stay home with their kids because you won't make schools safe?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'm not sure what the hon. member is referring to. The plan was made in conjunction with the teachers' union. I've been in contact. My department has been in contact. The scenarios have been endorsed by the teachers' union. They have been part of creating the plan. They will continue to be part of delivering the plan. We are doing everything that is humanly possible to ensure that our students and our staff return to school in a safe and caring manner.

**Member Irwin:** Given that we're talking about women and, in particular, working mothers, who contribute billions of dollars to the Alberta economy, and given that if schools are forced to shut down, women will be inevitably pushed out of the workforce, why is this government dropping \$4.7 billion on a corporate handout but isn't willing to invest in the safety measures that will let women fully participate in the economy while keeping their children safe?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are moving ahead with our recovery plan, and students will be returning to school in September. Our comprehensive school re-entry plan allows for a successful return to school while continuing to protect the health and the safety of our teachers, our staff, and our students. I want to refer to a quote that I have from the president of ASCA that says: we appreciate the requirements set out by the government to ensure that student and staff safety remains the priority as we navigate through these times to safely move closer towards a sense of normalcy. That's what everyone is looking for, a sense of normalcy. We will be bringing students back to school.

**Member Irwin:** Again I'm going to come back to my question. Working mothers contribute billions of dollars to the Alberta economy. If schools are forced to shut down, it will inevitably be women who are pushed out of the workforce. Why aren't you prioritizing children over a \$4.7 billion handout to corporations? I want you to speak about women and the impacts of your government's decisions.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I do not understand the opposition, who keeps working against women. It's, like, literally a war on women . . .

**Ms Sweet:** Point of order.

**Mrs. Aheer:** . . . coming from the opposition side. They would rather treat women as victims, that we're incapable. The misogyny that comes from that side is – I don't know; when women create misogyny, is it still called misogyny? I'm not a hundred per cent sure. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud continues to go against the women staffers on our side and continually puts them down. Why does the opposition think that women are incapable of doing all of these things? We are so competent and capable. I wish that the opposition understood. Please get behind women. Please stand behind them. Please listen to our minister of . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley has a question.

#### Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Doctors are a key part of rural Alberta. Doctors that live in rural Alberta provide services that are valued and appreciated. For decades there has been a shortage of rural doctors. I know that there have been times when my family has called to get an appointment, and it has been literally months before they could get in. We understand that one size does not fit all for attracting and retaining physicians across Alberta. To the minister: how have you made it easier for rural Alberta to attract and retain doctors?

**The Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 2:15.  
The hon. the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do indeed value rural physicians, and we're making targeted investments to support them. The member is right. Rural recruitment is complex, and it's about more than money, quite frankly. The NDP increased spending on physicians by \$1 billion a year, but we actually had a net loss of 27 rural physicians in 2018. They increased spending by 23 per cent over four years, and the number of rural physicians rose by 6 per cent. In Ontario they increased spending by 13 per cent, and the

number of rural physicians there rose by 15 per cent. That's the NDP: masters of doing less with more.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that physician pay has increased 23 per cent over the last four years and given that during that time the economy has shrunk, public-sector wages have been frozen, and private-sector wages have dropped and given that the NDP failed to improve rural physician services, wait times increased, and they spent more and got less in health care and given that the Alberta Medical Association has made statements regarding negotiations and have made offers with conditions and are using the rural doctor situation to sway public opinion, Minister, how is the ministry working with the AMA, and what is the status of the doctor pay negotiations?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, first, Mr. Speaker, let me acknowledge the critical role that doctors from overseas play in many of our rural communities and say how disgusted I was recently to hear a former NDP candidate call them scabs. The members opposite have had a week now to distance themselves from that kind of rhetoric. They've said nothing. We value doctors who choose rural practice, and we support them in that choice through the rural health professions action plan, or RHPAP. We're spending \$6.7 million a year through the plan, including 46 attraction and recruitment committees in 130 municipalities.

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

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that rural physicians spend their lives in service to our rural communities and they put down roots to stay and those that do truly feel the benefits of rural life and given that it is a lifestyle, not just a job, and given that rural doctors, our rural hospitals, and our rural health professionals are truly appreciated, how has the minister ensured proper incentives to attract and retain doctors in rural areas, and have you been working directly with them to solve their issues?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're spending \$81 million this year on rural physician recruitment and retention. That includes the rural, remote, northern program, which pays up to 36 per cent on top of all billings outside of our largest cities. The program was capped at \$60,000 a year, but I was proud to announce on April 24 that I was removing the cap, making it the most generous incentive of its kind in this country. The NDP are promoting a false narrative that physicians are leaving, so let me say it again. Alberta is the best place in Canada for physicians to practice, and it's going to stay that way under this government.

#### Provincial Land-use Policies

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yesterday the minister of the environment claimed that a policy from 1999 prevents him from selling public land in Kananaskis Country, but we've seen this UCP government repeal policies protecting the environment before many times. Minister, to protect Kananaskis Country from poorly informed red tape ministers or a government desperate to finance a \$4.7 billion handout, will you introduce legislation that will permanently protect the Kananaskis Country recreation policy? Yes or no?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there already is legislation around Kananaskis. Several provincial parks that are within the Kananaskis perimeter are established through legislation and order in council, and the Kananaskis policy has been in place since 1999. It was

signed by Ralph Klein. It ensures that we'll be able to use that area and protect it for generations to come. Despite the NDP saying that you can sell it, you can't sell it. That policy is clear. As I said yesterday, this government is committed to the Kananaskis policy and will make sure that Kananaskis is protected now and for future generations.

2:20

**Mr. Schmidt:** Given that we had a coal policy on the books since 1976 and that ministry unilaterally scrapped that and given that we've already seen the minister sell public lands without consultation and given that we've heard of more reckless plans to sell public land also without public consultation or respect for indigenous treaties and given that the minister now apparently thinks it's outrageous for the majority of Albertans to be concerned about the government's plan to sell public land, can he promise that he will put additional legislative protections for public land in place as well as guarantees for indigenous people and the broader public to be consulted on any further changes?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot to unpack there, a lot of mistruths, from my perspective, but I'll focus on the indigenous side of the question. It is already legislated and already a legal responsibility of the Alberta government to consult on land sales with indigenous communities and others. We have always honoured that. The only land sale in recent memory that the Alberta government has undertaken was actually approved by the former NDP environment minister. She was right. She followed through that process, and the sale went through. The money as a result of that sale went back into the land stewardship fund to buy other landscapes that needed to be conserved for environmental reasons. We will continue to consult with indigenous partners in the province.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, given that indigenous communities weren't consulted when this government announced plans to sell off or close parks and given that the government has so far used several sneaky tricks that have already impacted Albertans' ability to enjoy many of our public parks in Kananaskis Country and elsewhere and given that Kananaskis Country has been heavily impacted by the minister's changes in spite of the recreation policy and given that Albertans are seeing right through this minister's tactics and deflections, can the minister commit today to guarantee additional protections for all current public parks? It's what Albertans want.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what Albertans want is for the NDP to stop making things up. That member has stood inside this Chamber over and over and said that we're selling parks. It turns out we're not. When confronted yesterday with a policy that would not allow the Alberta government to sell parks, he now comes back and asks for a new policy. The reality is that we have a policy in place that ensures Kananaskis is protected. This government is committed to that policy and will continue to make sure that Kananaskis is protected. I'm proud to report to the Chamber that Kananaskis is busier than ever, and not one campground in Kananaskis has been shut down.

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

#### Health Minister

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend a democratic assembly of Alberta doctors called the Representative Forum voted overwhelmingly to call a referendum. The question is whether or not the Minister of Health still enjoys the confidence of Alberta doctors. If the vote says he doesn't, the AMA will ask the

Premier to step in and give his personal attention to the crisis the Health minister has created. Now, the Premier has claimed he loves referendums. Will he honour the results of this one and take over the file if Alberta doctors vote that they have no confidence in his minister?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, that wins the award for the dumbest question of the session, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected by over a million Albertans, the largest democratic mandate in history. The minister was elected by the vast majority of his Calgary-Acadia constituents. He's accountable, this government is accountable to Albertans, not to a special interest group. We will govern for all Albertans. We support our physicians. We will give them not just fair but generous compensation. They will continue to be the best compensated in Canada, but 10,800 people don't get to dictate the fiscal future of Alberta for 4.4 million Albertans.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given that this is a Premier who has no shortage of special interests to which he is beholden and happy to listen to and given that Westlock Mayor Ralph Leriger, Westlock county Reeve Lou Hall, village of Clyde Mayor Christa Clausing, who may have voted for this government, wrote a letter in June calling on the Health minister to "renegotiate and come to an agreement that ensures equitable access to medical services for everyone" and given that doctors have indeed shown that they are completely willing to negotiate and come to an agreement, why has the Health minister failed to write back to these local leaders, and why has he failed to get back to the table with Alberta doctors?

**Mr. Kenney:** He has not done so. Mr. Speaker, the Medical Association has failed to come forward with a credible proposal to maintain physician compensation at the current historically high level of \$5.4 billion. Let's just make this really simple. What the NDP wants is for us to open the floodgates for another \$2 billion of additional physician compensation costs over the next three years. While the private sector has seen their incomes go down by 10 per cent and public-sector unions have been at zeroes, the physicians have gone up by over 6 points a year, and the NDP wants that to continue. It's fundamentally unfair.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans trust their doctors more than this Premier's cherry-picked statistics and constant misrepresentations of their income and given that B.C.'s health minister and Manitoba's health minister, unlike this Premier or this minister, have managed to maintain and reach agreements with doctors just last year and given that Saskatchewan's Health minister managed to do the same thing with doctors earlier this month, why is it that this government and this minister have failed, where provincial counterparts have succeeded, in sitting down with their provincial doctors like adults and negotiating actual lasting agreements?

**Mr. Kenney:** Let's talk about the provincial government's record on this. Under the NDP the cost of physician compensation went up by 23 per cent over four years. They forced the nurses to take zeroes, they forced the janitors in the hospitals to take zeroes, but they gave the doctors, the most highly paid people in the public sector, who represent 10 per cent of the provincial budget and a quarter of public-sector compensation, a \$1 billion bonus. And without responsible leadership we will see another \$2 billion increase in those costs. During a fiscal and economic disaster, Mr. Speaker, we have to stand up for doctors and taxpayers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has a question.

### Economic Development and Investment Attraction

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government continues to take steps to create jobs and to encourage additional investment into our province. These include the repeal of the carbon tax, the recently expedited job-creation tax cut, and our obsession with red tape reduction. Alberta's recovery plan focuses on creating tens of thousands of jobs now while diversifying our economy and building long-term value for Albertans. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: what does our government plan to do in order to attract new investment into Alberta and to diversify our economy?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The NDP sat behind their desks raising taxes and driving out investment for four years. They raised taxes on job creators, brought in their job-killing carbon tax, and heaped mountains of red tape on the economy. We've introduced Bill 33, which will create the invest Alberta corporation, which will put boots on the ground and key markets across the world and attract investment in critical sectors of the economy like energy, agriculture, tourism, aerospace and aviation, financial services, and technology.

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Bill 33 creates the invest Alberta corporation, an investment attraction agency tasked with targeting high value markets and with bringing investment back to Alberta, and given that this agency is funded through the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and given that it is estimated that the agency will have an annual budget of approximately \$25 million once fully operational, to the same minister: how will your ministry support but also ensure that this agency is accountable?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. We are supporting the agency through previously allocated funds in Budget 2019 and Budget 2020, funds that are dedicated to investment attraction. We will ensure that invest Alberta has clear goals and targets as well as a publicly accountable board made up of professionals and experts who know how to navigate the investment field and know how to best position invest Alberta to attract investment. They are accountable to my department and will also be presenting annual reports to the government.

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that Alberta's recovery plan includes initiatives designed to diversify the economy and given that these initiatives include implementing sector-specific strategies, including in agriculture, forestry, tourism, technology and innovation, aviation, and finance, to the same minister: can you elaborate on these sector-specific strategies and on how Alberta is well positioned to be a destination for these sectors?

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

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. We have the lowest taxes on job creators, a low cost of living, a very high standard of living, and a highly educated workforce. These are all advantages that make us well positioned for investment from around the world.

The members opposite drove out investment, and even now, if given the choice, they would continue to devastate our economy. That's why Albertans fired them.

### Police Act Review

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, a review of the Police Act is incredibly important, but equally important is ensuring that it's done right by hearing all the voices of those impacted. The consultation that was started in 2018 included over 280 participants. That was the right thing to do because the act sits at the intersection to public safety and human rights and has massive impacts on poverty, mental health, and worker safety. To the Solicitor General: how will you be ensuring that the voices of all these stakeholders are included and that the purpose continues to be re-envisioning policing in this province, not just quick fixes?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for this important question. We just had a motion passed by this Legislature asking us to continue this good work to expedite the work on the Police Act. That work is already under way by our department. We've reached out to First Nation police services. We've reached out to indigenous communities. We've reached out to leaders from the black community. I'm looking forward as well to working with our minister of multiculturalism as well as our Minister of Municipal Affairs and our minister of indigenous affairs on this important topic. We're going to engage and make sure we get this right for Albertans.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you. Given that one of the most important aspects of protecting the safety of communities, the rights of citizens, and the mental health of our front-line police officers themselves involves ensuring that complaints made about police are dealt with quickly and effectively and given that there was support from police chiefs and criminal lawyers for a body outside police services to review complaints made against officers, will the review include consideration of an independent agency to review all complaints against the police, not just the serious and sensitive ones?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The feedback that we received from our preliminary discussion has highlighted that exact point. Police oversight and making sure that we get that done properly is a big topic. We're going to continue to engage with all of the stakeholders, including our chiefs of police as well as our municipal leaders and police commissions, on this very topic. We have to make sure that we get this done right. That is one of the areas where ASIRT – they handle the most serious incidents right now. We're looking at potentially expanding their scope, but we want to make sure that we consult and get that right.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister for that answer. Given that front-line police officers are called on to do more complex work while also being required to handle complex mental health issues that fall through the cracks in other systems and given that I and others have heard from countless front-line officers that they are often asked to make decisions and perform operations that they've never been trained to do and given that this impacts everyone's safety, will the review include consideration of centralized standardized training for officers in the province, and will it include a central focus on de-escalation?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this topic, I really have to commend our Premier on the work that he did by putting in place an Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. That was forward thinking. Many of the concerns that people are raising around the world this province and this government has been taking action on for over a year, making sure that we deal with mental health and addictions, making sure that we expand the reach of drug treatment courts, expand the reach of treatment options, treatment facilities. That is the priority that we have been working on. We've heard from many other people as well about the pressures on our police. We're going to continue to work with them. But, as well, I really want to commend our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions on the important work that he's doing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader has a question.

#### **School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding** (continued)

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to fundraising, the UCP record is a sky-high deficit and a federal Liberal bailout for their fiscally incompetent staff. Now they're holding a \$3,000 fundraiser where those who can afford it can watch a derby with the Premier in a private suite. All the while, this government is suggesting that there is no money to relaunch schools safely or even to ensure that they have the resources to properly clean and safely distance children. To the Premier: would there be resources to keep our kids safe if your party hadn't had their hands in the taxpayers' pockets to pay for your birthday cards?

**The Speaker:** I struggle to find a question with respect to government policy, but the Government House Leader could respond.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, to be clear, first of all, it has – I don't think the hon. member knows what she's asking, but it clearly is not about government policy, Mr. Speaker. It's quite a silly question coming from the NDP if they're concerned about parties fundraising for their operations, when that party has been fundraising for weeks off of the outright misinformation over shutting parks despite the fact that their leader and their environment critic have admitted on the record that Alberta is not selling any parks. They continue to e-mail and raise money all across the province by creating fear with Albertans. Again, if the hon. member has concerns with fundraising tactics, I'd suggest she take it up with her own party.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there's no surprise that the Premier doesn't think that cleaning or distancing in schools is important to keep people safe and given that a photo of this recent fundraiser showed a packed room with zero masks

and zero distancing and given that the speed that the Premier took the federal bailout for his debt-ridden party and the slower-than-molasses speed he has taken to ensure our schools are properly funded and able to open safely shows where his real priority lies, Premier, if we can't trust you to give a speech safely, how can parents trust you to keep their kids safe from COVID? Or is this a do as I say, not as I do directive?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the ridiculousness that comes from the Official Opposition is just – it's ridiculous. I'll just say it twice. I don't know what the hon. member is referring to, but let me say this. We're very proud of the hon. the Premier, and we're very proud of the hon. the Education minister. They have put together a very good plan to get Alberta kids back to school. The plan is well thought out, it is supported, and it will make sure that our children are safe. As a father I feel very confident in that plan, and I want to thank the Premier and the Education minister for helping us get our kids back to school.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will table a picture of the fundraiser if that helps.

Given that at this derby where you pay \$3,000 for the privilege of sitting in a suite with the Premier there was only a single mention of public health rules and given that this lack of concern for keeping people safe was reflected in your plan to relaunch schools, which doesn't do a thing to keep kids and staff safe, and given that this Premier took money from the taxpayers to bail out the UCP and is now telling these same taxpayers that there isn't a cent to help keep their kids safe from the pandemic, to the Premier: if money is the issue, will you repay the federal taxpayers for their bailout so that the UCP can use it to keep kids safe?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it took three questions for me to figure out what the hon. member was referring to. She is referring to a party fundraiser that has followed all of the rules, is completely within the law that that hon. member's former government established. Yes, our party is proud that we work to be able to raise funds, not use taxpayer funds from the Alberta government, that that party used to try to get from the Alberta government when they were in power. The reality is that this is a normal fundraiser. Here's the difference between us and them. They need Gil McGowan and their union partners to give them millions of dollars to do it. We work with Albertans, and, yes, we go out and have a little bit of fun as we raise money.

#### **Petrochemicals Incentive Program**

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity announced plans for a new petrochemical program for the province, the Alberta petrochemicals incentive program, or APIP. APIP will play an important role in our economic diversification and recovery and improve investor confidence in Alberta's growing petrochemical sector. Over the last 10 years the U.S. has invested over \$265 billion in petrochemicals. That's over 15 times what's been invested in Canada. To the associate minister: can you please share how APIP will support Alberta's efforts to diversify our energy industry?

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity has the call.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The Energy minister and myself yesterday had a meeting with Wayne Prins,

who's the executive director for CLAC – that's a union that benefits from a strong Alberta economy – and he described the abundant natural gas supply in Alberta as not a gift but a miracle. But in order to translate that miracle into jobs and into real benefits for Albertans, we need vision. That's what APIP does. It attracts world-class petrochemical facilities to Alberta. APIP is about economic recovery, it's about jobs, and it's about diversification.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Minister. Given that yesterday the Member for Calgary-Mountain View stated that the NDP developed a diversification plan by “working closely with experts and industries” and given that the members opposite appear to have found their definition of consultation in the revisionist dictionary and given that David Chappell, chair of the Resource Diversification Council, says that APIP is exactly what the Alberta economy and petrochemical producers need, to the associate minister: can you please tell the House how this government took the PC's petrochemical diversification plan and made it even better?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP enjoy complaining about problems almost as much as they enjoy doing nothing about them. That was no different when they came to office. When lightning struck in 2015, the NDP took the PDP program developed under the PCs in 2014 and they just hit print. But you know what? That's not good enough for this government. My team spent the last 14 months consulting with industry, finding out what they liked about the program, how we can make it better, and I'm proud to say that my team took a good program and we made it better.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you to the minister. Given that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View also asked for intellectual honesty when talking about diversification and given that hearing the members opposite call for honesty in any capacity is just too rich and given that my previous questions have demonstrated that the NDP, while in government, failed at both consulting with industry and being intellectually honest about how they developed their diversification programs, can the minister please clarify why that side of the House was intellectually dishonest when they claimed pieces of our government's economic diversification plan came from them?

2:40

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's track record with telling the truth is about as short as their track record on economic diversification. Just to be clear – and I've said it before – PDP was developed under Prentice, the PCs in 2014. Now, there was an election and lightning struck, and the NDP came to government before the PCs had a chance to roll it out. I will recognize the NDP for having the wherewithal to also recognize a good Conservative program. That's what they rolled out, and I commend them for that. But we're taking that program, and we're going to make it better.

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

The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to notify the Chamber that we will be extending the Routine according to the standing order that allows me to do that. Very detailed.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose has a statement to make.

### Economic Recovery Plan

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, and I'm very glad to have this opportunity to give my member's statement regarding Alberta's recovery plan. Our province's economic recovery is counting heavily upon new private capital investment to restore and stabilize growth in a post-COVID world. Since day one Alberta's government has been committed to supporting communities across our province throughout the pandemic. Just a few short weeks ago our government announced Alberta's recovery plan. Our plan is designed to create tens of thousands of jobs right now, make Alberta more competitive in the long term, and show investors from around the world that Alberta has reopened for business.

Alberta's economic recovery is counting heavily upon new private capital investment to restore and stabilize business growth in a post-COVID world. For communities in my constituency of Camrose, the Alberta recovery plan provides new opportunities for small businesses to flourish in a challenging global economy. On July 1 our government lowered the corporate tax rate from 12 per cent to 8 per cent as part of the recovery plan. This means that Alberta has the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada. More specifically, this tax cut enables small businesses in my constituency to create jobs and stimulate the local economy. This is just one of the many important parts of Alberta's economic recovery plan.

Our plan is designed to benefit all Albertans from every corner of the province, and this is just another example of Alberta being a leader on the national and international stages. But, Mr. Speaker, we could not have done this without the resiliency of Albertans. It's because of them that we can move forward. I'm so proud to support an Alberta recovery plan that puts Albertans first, prioritizes growth, and helps build and diversify our economy.

### School Re-entry Plan

**Member Irwin:** No matter how much I prepared, no matter how many pep talks I gave myself, I was always so nervous as a teacher heading into the first day of school. But it's not even fair to try to draw a comparison to what teachers are feeling right now in July. They've heard the UCP's plan for school reopening. They're worried sick. They're losing sleep. They're losing hope. Before I'm accused of fearmongering, allow me to share just a few of the messages I've received.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

Grade 3 teacher, Edmonton: “I teach, and I have a toddler at home. My stomach is in knots. I understand that maybe it's time for students to go back to school – maybe – but I'm terrified for the well-being of my students and my own family.”

Grade 4 teacher, rural Alberta: “I'm honestly scared. Yes, I can wear a mask. Yes, I can socially distance. Yes, I can self-evaluate my health every morning. I'm scared for my health, both physical and emotional, my spouse's health, my class's health, and the health of my little town.”

Educational assistant, Edmonton: “At least half of our kids are nonverbal and rely on a shared assisted communication device. For many of them self-regulation involves physical touch. It will be incredibly tough to keep safe, and this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to complexities involved in a special-needs classroom.”

High school teacher, Calgary: “I cannot wait to see my students who have exceptional needs. School will be different, and most of my students will attend. They don't have the luxury of being home-schooled or having private tutors as the Premier suggested as an

alternative. Despite the new guidelines, I know that if students are sick, they will show up because many parents cannot risk losing out on a day of work.”

Look, I could spend hours sharing with this House concerns from parents, staff, and students, and to be honest, I wish I could, in the hopes of getting the UCP to realize that you cannot gamble with safety. Other jurisdictions are choosing to act with clear plans and added supports for safely reopening schools. It can be done. On behalf of those asking for us to be their voice, I urge this government to listen and go back to the drawing board because I don't want to be back here in this House in the coming months reflecting on how we should have done more, so please do more now before it's too late.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Capital Projects and Job Creation

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The NDP's fiscal mismanagement, the collapse of oil prices due to wars between OPEC dictatorships, and the unforeseen impacts of COVID-19 have all dealt a huge blow to Alberta's economy, leading to the largest economic collapse in our history since the Great Depression. Our government campaigned on a commitment to be bold and make strategic investments to get our province back on track and Albertans back to work. That's why our government doubled the capital maintenance and renewal spending for 2020 and accelerated over \$1 billion to fix roads, bridges, hospitals, and schools.

Now our government is taking great leaps to support Alberta's economic recovery by tackling much-needed infrastructure projects. Alberta's recovery plan will see a record \$1 billion investment in our future, creating 50,000 jobs, growing our industries and our small and medium-sized businesses, improving our infrastructure, and getting Albertans back to work.

In my constituency the county of Big Lakes has been allocated almost \$900,000 for bridge replacements. East Prairie Métis settlement received over \$3.2 million for the construction of McKinley or Baker Road improvement for the drainage, which will give reliable access to school buses and emergency vehicles. Gift Lake Métis settlement received nearly \$1 million for bridge reconstruction and another \$1.8 million for a waste-water lagoon project, which will create nine jobs in the community. Again, the East Prairie Métis settlement was given an additional \$638,000 for water treatment upgrades, which will create another three jobs in my community. The list goes on and on.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Unlike the previous government, who killed jobs and attacked our largest industries, our government is working hard to keep our campaign promise of creating jobs, growing industry, and bringing back investment to this great province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, as the previous Minister of Education I am compelled to speak up about this UCP government's plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Now more than ever the choices that a government makes in education will have profound effects on student learning but also on the physical and social well-being of all Albertans. I can tell you for certain that this plan, that was rolled out yesterday by this UCP government, is not in the best interests of children and families here in the province of Alberta.

It's a plan that is loaded with many unsupported measures and several notable omissions, thus putting the safety of students, staff, and the general public at risk. For example, the plan calls for required cleaning of schools, with no extra funds for supplies or staff to carry this out. The plan calls for hand hygiene, again, with no funding for supplies to carry this out. Visitor screening, school bus cleaning: all the same. What about class size limits, adequate teaching support for supply teachers, supports for the youngest grades, students with special needs?

Schools were strapped for resources even before the pandemic hit due to significant cuts by this UCP government, and now these cuts are simply compounded because of the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, for the sake of our children, this UCP government needs to do the right thing and not just what they think they can get away with.

### Highways 16 and 40 Capital Plans

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, in the past rural Alberta has watched from the sidelines while large-scale infrastructure projects were announced for Alberta cities. Millions of people live in these large centres, and as constituents of Alberta their roads do deserve attention. The town of Edson, on the other hand, has a population of just over 8,000 residents, the town of Hinton has around 10,000, and Jasper has just under 5,000 full-time residents.

2:50

These communities are situated along highway 16, the Trans Mountain pipeline, and the Canadian National rail line. Together this critical infrastructure transports billions of dollars in goods and traffic yearly. Jasper alone takes in over 2 million visitors each year. They do so travelling almost exclusively along highway 16, which also acts as a goods thoroughfare for traffic to and from British Columbia. Yet the heavy industrial, freight, agricultural, residential, and tourist traffic along this vital link must swerve and dodge potholes that appear to grow larger by the day.

Recently I was contacted by a constituent who had his windshield severely damaged by such a deficiency. He was transporting his three-week-old baby at the time, and pieces of glass were sent back towards the infant. These are the kinds of perils rural Albertans have had to face for years now.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Transportation has recently visited West Yellowhead, and I know that he understands the issues we face. I would like to thank him and his ministry for prioritizing repairs and enhancements along highway 40, with a project starting next year, and for the attention that stretches of highway 16 are receiving this summer.

The time to fix the infrastructure in rural Alberta is now, and Alberta's government is showing that this is a priority. By investing in roads, schools, and other core infrastructure, we are benefiting our communities and building for the future. Improving and repairing infrastructure is a key component of Alberta's recovery plan and is essential for rural Alberta and West Yellowhead. Our safety depends upon it, our economic success depends upon it, and it's the right thing to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Calgary Storm Damage Recovery Funding

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, on June 13 northeast Calgary was hit by a hailstorm that was the fourth-largest natural disaster in Canadian history. Over a billion dollars in damage was done. Homes were devastated, cars were totalled, and livelihoods were hurt.

While the communities of northeast Calgary were calling out for help recovering and rebuilding, this Premier chose to ignore them.



When the Leader of the Official Opposition took the initiative to visit these communities to meet with those impacted, this Premier called it politicizing, until he did it days later. When the Premier finally, after days of inaction and buck passing, announced that the disaster recovery program would be initiated to help, he failed to even include hail damage, sewer backup, and insurance deductible as part of it, leaving out the support that people need and letting families fall through the cracks. This government's only response to this disaster has been to pass the buck to the insurance industry and ignoring the calls for help from those struggling.

Earlier today I was joined by families from northeast Calgary, who are tired of this government's delay. They are tired of this government's failure to stand up and support them and their families. Today I and the Leader of the Official Opposition wrote to the Premier, asking him to undertake some simple step that will do more to help the residents of northeast Calgary recover than this fake DRP this Premier announced.

This government has let the people down through their inactions and lack of compassion. Today, Mr. Speaker, the people abandoned by this government are still looking for proper hail damage relief. Premier, do the right thing.

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

#### Alberta Parenting for the Future Association

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Parenting for the Future Association is an incredible organization in my riding that provides tons of programming to children and families. From classes for parents prechildbirth to programs on eating well for children up to the age of 12, the APFA covers a little bit of everything. The association provides extensive programming for those under five years old, ranging from sign language to help better communicate with babies to music classes and to storytime and to movie nights, which I have enjoyed with my two boys.

Now, I have had the honour of getting to meet with this incredible group many times since my election last spring, and they care deeply about their work and understand the importance of it to the development of young minds. With over 40 employees, whether they be full-time, part-time, or summer students – they're typically filtering through over the course of a year – and over 100 others volunteering time, the APFA holds a major place in my community of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. The high levels of volunteerism and support from the community mean that APFA is able to serve over 33,000 people each and every single year.

Now, I'm incredibly glad that all of this was considered when the hon. Minister of Children's Services was looking at the redesign of how we deliver programming for children in the province. APFA was designated as a hub for early childhood programming and, as a result, received one of the largest grants in the province outside of Edmonton and Calgary in order to assist them in their valuable work. This funding will mean that not only will Alberta Parenting for the Future be able to continue operating as before, but they may be able to expand their reach and the range of their important work into the future.

As parents return to work and life begins to return to normal under the Alberta government's economic recovery plan, this programming will be more important than ever to the residents of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain.

Thank you.

#### Women's Workforce and Political Participation

**Ms Renaud:** Fortune 500 companies with the most women on their boards outperform companies with the least. Stats Canada reports

that less than 20 per cent of board directorships are held by women. Women continue to be underrepresented in the fields of math, information science, research, law, engineering, business, et cetera. You get the picture.

In 2018 women made up only 27 per cent of police officers at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Thanks to a CBC opinion piece published yesterday by Emma May, we know that Alberta women make up only 19.4 per cent of the total energy labour force with only 1 per cent of all energy CEOs and presidents being women. The picture is also bleak when you examine the number of women participating in finance, utilities, distribution, trade, and construction sectors.

Then we come to women in politics. Although our numbers have increased since women won the right to vote, we are a long way from equity in terms of representation. Representation is key. We know that diversity at decision-making tables lead to outcomes that are more attentive to the needs and interests of those people. Looking at the outcomes this government is producing is proof enough of the need for diversity in this place. This government once again is out-of-step with science and research that tells us investing in diversity makes economic sense. Case in point: the UCP's economic recovery council made up of 12 people, only three of which are women.

Better outcomes for women must include safe workplaces, workplaces where there are policies in place to ensure workplace harassment is not tolerated if it happens, and it is managed effectively. Two weeks ago I pointed out workplace harassment in real time and was kicked out for doing so. The solution was to move a man who frequently and purposefully sets out to harass members while they are speaking: no apology, no commitment to change.

Commitment to increasing diversity in leadership roles requires effort and measurable progress. We are supposed to be setting an example in this place. I am looking to the leadership of this Chamber to take some action.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Government Spending and Accountability

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One point six million dollars: that's the amount of taxpayer dollars unaccounted for when an independent audit showed the atrocious spending by the Lethbridge safe consumption site. The audit includes expenses for car rentals and hotel rooms in Portugal. The organization's credit card also purchased a \$2,200 television, gone missing; \$1,060 for supplies from a dealer of smoking accessories; \$2,100 worth of gift cards from a Lethbridge oil change company owned by an individual who was in a relationship with an ARCHES senior executive; and the organization purchased \$1,129 worth of gift cards for its employees and board members. An unnamed senior executive was authorized to receive \$80,000 in salary, but that executive was actually paid nearly \$340,000 in 2018-19.

Mr. Speaker, this is only a small example of the lunatic left's poor financial literacy and mismanagement of public dollars. They misuse the funds that are meant to help those struggling with addictions. We all know the NDP track record with the provincial budget. In four years the former Finance minister racked up close to \$100 billion in debt, interest charges of over \$2 billion a year, and multiple credit downgrades. How about a former NDP MLA claiming nearly \$35,000 in mileage expenses, more than any other MLA, and she only lived just outside of Edmonton? Another former NDP MLA spend \$5,000 on coffee in one year. I could stand here all day and provide examples of the NDP record of mishandling taxpayer dollars. To quote a *Calgary Sun* reporter, "One can't help

but think the great NDP experiment in virtue-signalling is blowing up like a chemistry set exploding in the hands of a kid who knows nothing about chemistry.” This is a perfect way to sum up the former government and their scandalous spending ways.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it’s an honour to table the committee’s annual report covering its activities during 2019. This report fulfills the requirement of Standing Order 55 and also section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. The report will also be made available on the Assembly website.

Thank you.

3:00

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills I’m pleased to table the committee’s final report on Bill 204, Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. The bill was referred to the committee on July 8, 2020. The committee’s final report recommends that Bill 204 proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 204.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Horse Racing Alberta Act Horse Racing Alberta annual report, 2019.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:15 the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order. The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m proud to rise and argue this particular point of order. The point of order was called in response to a question by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was asking about – basically, the substance of the question was: if we’re cramming 30-plus children into a classroom with no protective equipment, which is the government’s current plan, that’s basically going to create outbreaks. Those outbreaks are going to mean schools shut down, and when schools shut down, it will impact primarily women.

I think the logic in that question is pretty clear. It’s a very reasonable question. In response to that question the hon. minister for the status of women stood up and responded by accusing that member and our entire side of the House of working against women, having a war on women, treating women as victims and incapable. She used the word “misogyny” multiple times and then

proceeded to reference specifically the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who was not involved in the exchange in any way.

Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). I think there is a clear precedent in this House about accusing people of attacking individuals directly, which this clearly is. I think the word “misogyny” in particular, used multiple times, used to reference specific people, is extremely problematic, particularly in light of the fact that what we’re advocating for is ensuring safety of our children in child care, is ensuring affordable child care so that women can participate in the workforce. I think that in light of the conversation, the comments were ridiculous. But in addition to being ridiculous, referring to it as a literal war on women is incredibly problematic. They were clearly statements not grounded in any sort of policy, not intended to make any sort of point about government policy but instead intended to insight disorder in this place.

It’s clear that we have a track record of supporting women, of ensuring that they’re on boards, of ensuring that they are on the bench, of ensuring that they are in politics, of ensuring that they have access to affordable child care so that they can work, of minimum wage, which supports women. I think our policy history is clear. I think this government’s policy history is equally clear. For the minister of the status of women to stand and accuse us of misogyny, especially naming specific members in that accusation, I think is extremely problematic.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were a lot of comments made by the Official Opposition deputy House leader in there in regard to what the minister may or may not have said. I haven’t had time to pull the transcript. I assume, Mr. Speaker, you’ll have the Blues.

In general, though, I think most of what she has referred to certainly sounds like a matter of debate before the Assembly. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the fact she is debating and attempting to defend her party shows that it is probably a matter of debate on most of those issues. But I do not have every comment from the question.

The comments that I heard from the hon. minister were in particular that the NDP were working against women. I will point out that the minister is a woman, who was articulating how she felt the NDP was behaving against women. That is her right inside this Chamber and certainly would be a matter of debate.

I would also point out as I have before, Mr. Speaker, that if the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader is concerned about making accusations against individuals of this Chamber, she should probably go back and read *Hansard* from her entire party’s question period behaviour today, where they repeatedly accused the Education minister or the party that she belongs to or the government that she belongs to of trying to hurt children or hurt parents or make teachers sick or cause teachers to have something happen to them as a result of the policy. Now, I think that is distasteful of the Official Opposition, but that is a matter of debate inside this Chamber, which is why I would not call a point of order. [interjection] I know that the Leader of the Opposition is heckling on that issue. That’s why I didn’t call a point of order, because it is a matter of debate.

But if the hon. member is worried about the decorum in the context – she seems to be indicating that it will cause a disturbance inside the Legislature – she should probably have a look at her party’s behaviour inside this Chamber, if that’s truly her belief. But from my perspective, without the benefit of the Blues, this is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, my assumption is that there are no other submissions. I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women at 2:15 or just moments prior said:

I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I do not understand the opposition, who keeps working against women. It's, like, literally a war on women . . .

A point of order was called. She then continued:

. . . coming from the opposition side. They would rather treat women as victims, [as if they were] incapable. The misogyny that comes from that side is – I don't know; when women create misogyny, is it still called misogyny? I'm not a hundred per cent sure. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud continues to go against the women staffers on our side and continually puts them down. Why does the opposition think that women are incapable of doing all of these things? We are so competent and capable. I wish that the opposition understood [that]. Please get behind women. Please stand behind them. Please listen to our Minister of [Education].

Hon. members, from time to time individuals will make statements about other members or take a position about what individuals are doing or not trying to do. The point of order was called prior to the minister making any comments with respect to misogyny. I also know that she made statements about: "I'm not a hundred per cent sure" if it's still called misogyny. Then she went on to say that "the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud continues to go against the women staffers on our side." She never implied that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is or was a misogynist, only her opinion about her actions with respect to whether or not she puts staffers down, and I have seen such actions that may or may not have taken place.

I would like to direct all members to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 639. This is not my opinion, but it is the opinion of the authorities that we respect in this Assembly, or I hope that we do: "A member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order." I think this is a clear case of what we have here today. I would encourage all members to ensure that when raising points of order, they are actually points of order, not just an opportunity to continue debate that was taking place in question period.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. There is no point of order.

Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day Government Motions

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

#### Adjournment of Spring Sitting

32. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2020 spring sitting of the Assembly be extended beyond July 23, 2020, until such time as or when the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, and at such time the Assembly stands adjourned.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is self-explanatory.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, according to Standing Order 3(9) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 32 carried]

### 3:10 Government Bills and Orders Second Reading Bill 30 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

Mr. Dang moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 30, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 30, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment July 21: Mr. Nally]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are on amendment REF1. Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. the Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 30 in second reading and in particular on the amendment to have it referred to committee. Of course, the reason we would be arguing that it be referred to committee is because it is a profoundly flawed bill and it requires extensive reconsideration. I will devote the remainder of my comments to why our caucus and members of our caucus believe that that is the case.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I'd like to start from the perspective at the outset of talking just a little bit about public health care, what it represents and why it matters. As I'm sure many, many people are aware, when Canadians as a whole are asked about what makes them Canadian, what makes them proud to be Canadians, the vast majority of Canadians will probably not even talk for 60 seconds before they get to the point of talking about medicare. They say that, in fact, because medicare is one of the critical decisions that the people of this country made back in the second half of the 20th century in order to care for one another. It represented one of the few digressions from the path taken by the U.S. versus the path taken by many western democracies in Europe. It is, of course, one of the digressions that has resulted in a profoundly improved quality of life for all Canadians.

I, of course, think a great deal of it because, you know, it was for all intents and purposes started by our party through the work of Tommy Douglas and those that followed him in the Saskatchewan NDP. Then he was in Ottawa and pushed the ultimate adoption of the model by the federal government such that all Canadians could get the benefit of medicare.

Just briefly, I mean, why does that matter, and what is medicare? Well, I'm sure most members here know that, but in essence it means the difference between health care that is afforded to citizens by right of being citizens on the basis of their health needs rather than on the basis of their wealth. It's that simple, the idea being that the fundamental – fundamental – human right is the right to be safe and healthy. In Canada we concluded that that right should not be distributed on the basis of wealth.

Because of that, we care very deeply about ensuring that all Canadians by right of citizenship have access to adequate and fulsome health care and that it is in no way distributed on the basis of other issues like economic strength and economic status or any other things, on the basis of geography, on the basis of race, none of those things. All those things should have nothing to do with whether or not you receive health care. It should have to do solely

with what your health needs are: a pretty simple concept but one worth remembering because it is so fundamental.

I'll just digress a little bit. Back in the day I used to have the opportunity to go to all the schools in my riding and many schools across the city and do a Read In Week, where you go and read to kids at school. I would always read Mouseland to kids in the school. It always gave me the opportunity to talk to them about Tommy Douglas and medicare. Of course, it was always helpful to be able to introduce that topic by asking them if they were aware of a cross-country survey that had been conducted asking all Canadians to vote on who is the greatest Canadian ever. I'd always ask the kids, "Well, who do you think won that?" and one hand would go up. Well, originally when I started doing it, they'd put their hand up and suggest it was, you know, Wayne Gretzky, then, as this went along, Sidney Crosby, and at a certain point Connor McDavid.

Always they would guess whether it was Terry Fox because, of course, this event always occurred in September, and everyone was doing the Terry Fox Run in most of their classes. Of course, all of the kids would put up their hands. Some of the kids that had listened a little bit more to their history class and stuff would put up their hands and say John A. Macdonald, various people. They might talk about – I'm trying to think about some of the other ones.

**Ms Hoffman:** Nellie McClung.

**Ms Notley:** Nellie McClung: very rare but sometimes, every now and then. They might actually say whoever the Prime Minister was at that point. You get the picture.

Very rarely, of course, would they put up their hand and say "Tommy Douglas." But, of course, that is in fact the person who was voted the greatest Canadian by, you know, tens of thousands of voters because he is known as the father of medicare. Then it allowed me to talk to the kids about what medicare is and to ask them to imagine that if they were playing soccer and one of them kicked the ball out of the playground and another one went to grab it and in the middle of that they got hit by a car, it was very important that that child could be taken immediately to the emergency room and that it was not a situation of the ambulance drivers having to first stop and call the parents to find out if they could afford to be taken. That was literally the situation that Tommy Douglas grew up under before we had medicare, so it was why he cared so deeply about it and worked so hard through first the CCF and then the NDP to make sure that we had medicare in Canada.

With that being the background, you can imagine that we are very committed to ensuring that the value of our public health care system is preserved and protected for the benefit of all Albertans. I want to talk about that and how Bill 30 therefore impacts those fundamental values and why we are so concerned that this bill be referred to committee for further review. Of course, it really does eat away in an insidious, rather behind-the-scenes, not-right-upfront way. But it does, make no question, eat away at those fundamental principles that matter so much to all Canadians.

Let me start from the starting point. This bill is being introduced in the middle of a world-wide pandemic. I think it should go without saying – yet, clearly, it must be said because for whatever reason we are still doing this – that we should not be introducing legislation that creates huge changes in how we manage our health care system in the middle of a world-wide pandemic. Why? Because stability in the health care system when we are managing the consequences of a world-wide pandemic is a good thing, and chaos within the health care system in the middle of a world-wide pandemic is a bad thing. This bill opens the door to a tremendous amount of uncertainty and chaos, and it will undermine, as a result, the quality of care received

by all Albertans, regardless of income, through our health care system in the middle of a world-wide pandemic. It's not wise.

Let's also remember that this bill is not just being introduced in the middle of a world-wide pandemic; it is also being introduced in the middle of an additional context, and that context is one that has been created by this UCP government pretty much since they were elected in April 2019 through a series of ongoing and almost relentless attacks on the quality of our health care system in Alberta.

3:20

To just begin, let us remember that in the spring, in February 2020, this year, right before the reality and the severity of the pandemic was made clear to members of the government, they introduced their first full budget. Within that budget they had, for all intents and purposes, taking into account population and inflation, not taking into account aging, because, of course, that's actually another cost pressure, clawed back a billion dollars out of our health care system.

In order to get ready for that, they had made a number of changes and decisions even before that budget was introduced in February 2020. Some of those were not nothing. They did things like: they advised nurses, they advised front-line caregivers, they advised care aides, they advised LPNs, they advised physiotherapists, they advised lab technologists, they advised all these folks that thousands of them were going to be laid off in the coming year. That happened in the fall of 2019.

In addition to that, they stripped paid pharmacare, so government-funded support for pharmaceutical treatment, from about 60,000 Albertans. We all know, of course, that the Health minister's partner was employed and I believe still is employed in an occupation that essentially created this 60,000-person increase in the market within which her business operated. In addition, they increased the cost of pharmacare to other remaining seniors and changed the way in which the pharmacare benefits were paid out to seniors.

They also cancelled the construction of a world-class public lab system that not only would have provided for the long-term, cost efficient delivery of testing services for Albertans for decades and decades to come but also would have formed the foundation for a number of very significant economic diversification efforts. Nonetheless, they did that as well.

Where else are we here? Oh, yes. Then, of course, they introduced a bill to give themselves authority to essentially walk away from their obligations to negotiate with doctors.

These were all the things that had happened pretty much come around about February 2020.

Then, you know, we were looking off into the horizon, and we could see that this pandemic thing was pretty serious. We knew that things were getting a little touchy between the government and the doctors. Not unexpected; negotiations often go that way. But we said: oh, well, they're not going to go ahead with the kinds of things they were threatening before because we're on the eve of a pandemic. But, no, no, they did. They ripped up their agreement and embarked upon a wholesale attack on Alberta physicians, resulting in, most immediately, a significant destabilization and ultimate reduction in health care accessed by Albertans living particularly in Alberta's rural communities. That was a thing that we were quite surprised to see.

So that was the situation that we were dealing with when the pandemic struck. We had a significantly weakened health care system. We had a health care system where almost every facet of it was under attack. We had a health care system which had enjoyed roughly, you know, four years of stability for the first time in many. Then the pandemic hit.

Then on top of that, after watching what was going on with the pandemic, its impact on the economy, its impact on people's lives

and assessing what was going on across the world and understanding, I assume, although you never could quite tell from the remarks of the Premier – for a long time it did seem as though he actually thought the pandemic ended in June. Nonetheless, most people could understand at that point that this was not a thing that was going away and that our health care system remained at tremendous risk and, more importantly, that the people who rely on it remain at risk until such time as we either find a vaccine or effective treatment or the virus itself mutates into a less, you know, dangerous form of itself.

That was happening. And what does the government do? They march in, you know, after Canada Day, in the middle of the summer, in the middle of a pandemic, and introduce this bill, which does a number of things which eat away at the principles of public health care and also a number of different components of the public health care system that are designed to ensure quality care for Albertans. In general, I mean, this bill – other people have talked about it – is an omnibus bill. It's a classic Harper technique: roll in a change to about nine or 10 pieces of legislation – I think it's nine – in one bill and then hope that nobody can keep track of all the moving pieces. It does do that. I'm going to talk particularly about three things that this bill does that we think are tremendously unwise. I won't take a long time on the first two, and I will take a little bit longer on the second piece.

The first thing that the bill does is that it changes the structure of the College of Physicians & Surgeons. Now, when the government first introduced this bill, it sort of seemed: well, you know, that's not necessarily a bad thing. It's definitely the case, I think, that professionals can benefit from the wisdom of members of the public as they govern their affairs, particularly since they are such important members of the public and so important to the people of the province, and maybe it brings in a healthy breath of fresh air and some transparency. The college itself seemed to be articulating that it wasn't a bad thing, so we thought: well, it should be okay. We were a little nervous about it because, of course, this government's history of appointments has been deeply flawed, again, since they've been elected.

I won't spend a whole long time talking about it, but we do have, you know, the example of the appointment of Leighton Grey, someone who believes in anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists and believes that we have too many women on the bench. He's somehow put in charge of assessing who would or would not be a good Provincial Court judge. That didn't show a whole bunch of homework being done. We had the Premier's former campaign manager, we recently learned, being appointed to the AER. We have a former candidate running the much talked about war room profoundly ineffectively. We have the MLA who stepped down to allow the Premier to run now suddenly skipping around Houston as our emissary to the energy industry with zero reason for anyone to believe that he's qualified for that job.

We have, of course, the former executive director of the UCP serving as the Health and Seniors Advocate and mental health advocate in the government with no qualification at all other than the fact that, I mean, she knows members of government. I suppose if you wanted to ask if she'd be a good lobbyist, she's qualified, but in terms of having a resumé that demonstrates the ability to be responsive to the issues of people with health care concerns and mental health concerns and seniors concerns, you know, it's not there. So you can understand, then, why we were a bit nervous, but it was balanced against the sort of pro arguments or the it's-not-so-bad arguments that I originally outlined.

3:30

Then, unfortunately, we had the spectre of what happened last week, and then we suddenly realized what was going on, because last week we suddenly had the Minister of Health writing to the college, essentially pressuring them and purporting to direct them to write a whole new professional standard, in breach of their own policies and practices and procedures, for how they go about developing professional standards, to effectively threaten physicians who would leave Alberta with discipline, up to and including the loss of their licence, we assume, in order to pressure the physicians, who are exercising their constitutionally protected right of mobility under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when they say, "Okay; this government is attacking us; I guess I'm going to leave Sundre or St. Paul or these various places and go to a place where the government respects my work," which is their right. But we now have the minister conducting himself as though he is the final arbiter of what constitutes professional standards and ethics for medical professionals.

Obviously, then, having seen that, which is deeply troublesome, brutally illegal – you know, we'll leave it to the courts to ultimately assess that, but I have no doubt that that is what the conclusion will be – and to then be in a situation where Albertans are relying on this government to appoint 50 per cent of the board members of that college, based on the record that I just outlined, well, you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, why many Albertans would be very concerned about what the future of medical professionalism is in Alberta of our doctors and, overall, what the implications of that are for the integrity of our health care system. Not surprisingly, we are opposed to that now. We were kind of, like, prepared to give it a consideration at the outset, but now that we've seen the conduct of the minister last week, which was just jaw-dropping in its oppressive tactics, there's no way on the planet that we can support that.

The second thing that this bill does is that it goes through a number of changes that relate to the administration and the mandate and the transparency of the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act, and it does so in a number of different ways: it changes the relationship with the minister, it gives the minister a whole bunch more influence, it reduces the transparency and the reporting-out obligations of the organization, and it also reduces the independence and the objectivity of the components of their mandate. It really does mush it all up.

What many members of this House won't remember is that the strengthened provisions, that are now being weakened through this act, that govern the conduct of the health quality council act actually came into effect – you'll have to forgive me if I get the dates a little bit wrong – somewhere between 2009 and 2011. The reason that happened is that it was actually done by the former Conservative government as essentially a form of issue management in order to respond to growing controversy within the health care system that was happening in that time around a number of ill-informed and ill-advised decisions being taken by the government.

They all sort of linked back to effort number, you know, I'd say four by the Conservative government to actually move towards full privatization of the funding of our health care and a bunch of sort of he said, she said debate over whether that was really happening and then the release of cabinet documents that showed that it was very clear that they were looking at it and they were actually considering moving to a private funding model. Then there was a whole range of controversies around the issue of wait times and ER wait times, and there was controversy around queue jumping to get flu vaccines related to I think it was H1N1. Anyway, I can't remember; it was all sort of in there. It was a bit of a Dumpster fire.

One of the things that the Conservative government of the day tried to do to settle people down with all the machinations that were going on and the “No, we’re not doing it,” “Oops, I guess you caught us doing it” kind of narrative that unfolded during this time was to ship it off to the Health Quality Council for them to do a review and then to also strengthen the independence of the Health Quality Council in order to ensure that they were actually a somewhat trustworthy destination for that review. So I find it ironic that now what we are doing is that we are weakening the independence of the Health Quality Council by this government, as it’s in the midst of messing around quite considerably with our health care system on multiple fronts – it is highly unfortunate.

You know, I think I would like to just read into the record – I’m not sure if folks have had an opportunity to read it into the record yet – the resignation letter of one member of the Health Quality Council, Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu. He wrote that he was resigning. He said basically that he’s doing it because the changes to the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act which are contained in Bill 30 – you may recall that I talked about how this was an omnibus and it amends nine bills. Well, one of the bills is the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act. He says that, in his opinion, “the changes will fundamentally and negatively transform the HQCA, thereby depriving Albertans of a key healthcare institution charged with improving patient safety and health service quality.” Then he went on to talk about that in more detail and talk about how he felt it was important to say that publicly and make his resignation public.

I do want to just offer my congratulations to this physician because I will say that back in 2008, when I first got elected, there were very few public servants and public appointees and officials who had the courage to speak out the way we are seeing so many more public officials and doctors and others speak out, and it at least speaks to that, notwithstanding the many efforts of this government to suppress many different elements or portions of our civil society’s access to freedom of speech, Albertans are actually engaging in it with a greater sense of their own rights than, certainly, I used to see back in 2008, 2009. So it’s a step forward. It is, however, a loss for Albertans with respect to the HQCA, and it is a loss to the HQCA, and the negative changes described by this physician within this act, Bill 30, represent a loss to all Albertans as far as the HQCA’s unimpeded contribution to our health care quality goes. It’s very unfortunate.

This is another reason, then, why I would strongly urge members of this House to refer this bill to committee, so that we could dig into much more detail on what the changes to the HQCA are in order to respond to the concerns that are articulately outlined in this letter and to protect this institution, of which the very mandate is to preserve the quality of health care received by Albertans in our public system. That is another thing that is addressed in Bill 30.

Now, the third thing that Bill 30 does – and, again, it does many things. Again, it’s an omnibus bill, and I’m not going to, at this opportunity, talk about all of them. But the third and most important thing that this bill does is that, in a very complex and insidious way – well, complex and overt way – it enhances and pursues a dramatic expansion of private delivery of publicly funded health care across the province. I will speak about that in a moment.

In addition to that, however, it also very insidiously creates the environment for the introduction and the growth of the private funding of publicly insured services. Of course, when you get into that world, what you are talking about – when you talk private delivery, you’re talking about undermining the quality of care. When you talk about private funding, you are essentially talking about credit-card medicine, two-tiered medicine, fundamentally driving right through those values that Tommy Douglas and the

founders of medicare worked so hard to provide to Canadians and, obviously, Albertans.

3:40

Let me talk first about private delivery. Now, without these changes under Bill 30, there was the opportunity for certain private deliverers of health care in Alberta to get permission from the minister to deliver publicly funded services. The minister and others like to say: oh, well, there were all these services that were already there under the NDP, and this is just a continuation of the same. Now, first of all, two points on that. It is not a continuation of the same. This amounts to a qualitative change in the number and types of organizations that will deliver publicly funded health care, and it is also a qualitative change in the types of publicly funded health care that would be delivered by private providers. That’s the first thing. It is not the same at all. The comparison pre and post in terms of who would be doing private delivery, publicly funded is very, very different and will have a significant impact. I will talk about that in a moment.

In addition, let us also remember that once you allow someone or an organization or a corporation to get the ability to deliver publicly funded services, you make it more expensive and more challenging for citizens and the public sector to pull that delivery back into the public sector because, you know, they have rights – they have written contractual rights and all those kinds of things – and you end up having to paying it out. And the problem is, as I will discuss in a moment, that there are multiple times you would want to do that because, quite honestly, at almost every front the evidence is very clear that private delivery of publicly funded health care costs money, costs more, and undermines the quality of care received by citizens. The quality of care is reduced, and the cost to taxpayers is increased. That’s the fundamental summary of the state of play when you engage in moving to private delivery.

How are they doing that? Well, this bill removes from the act what exists now, which is the statutory obligation for the minister to only allow a new private operator to deliver a publicly funded type of health care if it doesn’t do damage to the overall system of public health care. Now, why would you need to take that out? If you believe that private delivery makes public health care better, why do you need to take the protection of public health care from private delivery out of your legislation? I’ll tell you why: because you know full well that the evidence is overwhelming, that in most cases it is black and white that moving publicly funded health care into private hands for delivery is going to undermine the overall system of public health care. Let’s get that provision out there as soon as we can because we do not want to be legislatively or legally held to that standard because then all our plans will go awry: that’s what they’re doing. Make no mistake, it is a legislative, statutory admission that private delivery doesn’t work as well as public delivery.

What are some of the reasons for that? Let’s talk about that. Government likes to argue that this is going to speed up services and shorten wait times. The problem is the evidence. Again, darn, darn, inconvenient evidence, studies, academics: oh, just so, so irritating to those folks over there because, you know, some people actually like to look at those things.

You know, we’ve got the example, for instance, of cataract surgery. In Edmonton two-thirds of cataract surgery is provided publicly. In Calgary 10 per cent is provided publicly. Calgary’s wait times are 50 per cent longer than Edmonton’s. Hmm. Private delivery is working just like gangbusters down there in Calgary, isn’t it? You’ve got to wait 50 per cent longer in order to go to your private provider of cataract surgery in Calgary. Okay. Point 1.

The HRC: some folks over there will remember that. In Edmonton the former Edmonton public health region worked strategically to create a centralized hip and knee replacement surgical facility but within the public system. In Calgary they contracted out to some friends and insiders who owned a private surgery. What happened? Well, wait times shot up in Calgary, were nicely reduced in Edmonton, and ultimately it was quite something because HRC was actually subsidized above and beyond the per-procedure scheme that would have been in place. They had to be subsidized for a whole bunch of other things, too, and once that subsidization was pulled back, they practically went out of business and also failed to provide timely access. So not once but twice the government had to step in to save their bacon, and ultimately they just took it back into the public system. Again, another example, a clear experience right here in Alberta.

Now, the government likes to talk about Saskatchewan, but again Saskatchewan is the same thing. When the government in Saskatchewan decided to privatize and allow for more privately delivered surgeries, no question that the wait times went down. Why? Because they subsidized it, and they put a whole bunch of extra public dollars into it. News flash: when you spend more, quality of health care does go up, and wait times go down. Nonetheless, these guys apparently only wanted to spend more on their privately delivered public health care. They simply did not want to spend it on the public system. The problem is that as soon as they withdrew that extra subsidy, wait times shot back up, and in the long term I have no doubt that we will see that they will get longer.

To be clear, Saskatchewan does not actually serve as an example of success. You need to look at how much money actually went into it and look at: if you'd put that money directly into the public system without having to skim off for the profit, probably the wait times would have gone down even more.

I'd like to also quote from a study that was published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. Just to be clear, not an AFL-run, third-party thing but, you know, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. What they found in the massive Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Studies Comparing Mortality Rates of Private For-profit and Private Not-for-profit Hospitals: they concluded that in addition to higher costs, patients treated in for-profit settings had poorer outcomes and higher mortality rates compared to those that are treated in a nonprofit setting. That's the conclusion that they found there.

But wait. It gets better. Actually, it doesn't get better. It gets worse, and the way it gets worse is this. Through this pandemic across this country we have seen painfully earned evidence of the difference in the quality of care received by seniors in private, for-profit long-term care versus publicly delivered long-term care. It is very, very clear that the quality of care received by people is lower in the private, for profit places even though those private, for-profit places often reserve for themselves the ability to reject the most acute and difficult patients.

3:50

So there's some evidence – I know it's irritating to everybody – about whether you see quality of care. Does it speed it up? No. Do we see an improved quality of care? No. What does happen? Well, I'll tell you what happens. When you have privately delivered, publicly funded health care services, the private sector very quickly moves to write up contracts so that they can skim the easiest procedures out of the public system. The easiest, fastest to deliver procedures are contracted out to the private sector. They typically are paid the average per-procedure rate for that. The more complicated procedures remain in the public health care system, so

we end up paying more for the easy ones than we should be. We lose the savings that come from volume in the overall health care system, so we drive up prices.

We also end up with this distorted situation where people get their surgery done faster if it's easy as opposed to if they need it more. So if you're, you know, for instance, a relatively nonarthritic young person who needs knee surgery versus an older person who's going for their third complicated knee surgery but quite frankly you're in far more pain, even though your surgery is going to be more complex, guess who gets treated first? The one who needs it less. Is need continuing to be the driving force? No, it sure isn't. On top of that, when you have that situation, the private providers then start to skim the limited resources that exist within the health care system. A perfect example of that is anaesthesiologists. There is a shortage of anaesthesiologists. The private providers, who can pay the same amount for the simpler procedures, pull the resources into that sector, starving the public one.

Bear in mind that when you talk about the provision of health care, one of the things the right has a tendency to do is that they go: oh, look at how much it costs, this government budget line item right here. They fail to acknowledge that whether I pay for my health care through my taxes or whether I pay for my health care by buying insurance or whether I pay for my health care by reaching into my back pocket and finding my credit card, I'm still paying. When you're evaluating the cost-benefit analysis and the overall most effective cost, you need to look at that whole big picture instead of just pulling one little piece out, you know, conveniently. What people fail to do is look at that whole big picture.

So what the evidence – I'm sorry; it's really irritating for those over there – shows is that the more fractured an overall health care system is, the more opportunity there is for private delivery, even if it's publicly funded, into the overall system, and the more you slowly de-insure certain services and make people go on the side and pay for it, either through insurance or with their credit card, the more the overall system costs us collectively and the lower our health outcomes become. It's that simple.

You know, it's not complicated economics. It's actually common-sense economics if you take just a little bit of time to go through it. I'm so privileged to have this much time to be able to speak about it, and I'm sure the people opposite are also really happy that that's happening. We have not health need but corporate convenience driving the decisions about who gets the limited resources first around receiving certain types of health care, so it's not good.

Now, the other thing that happens when you have private delivery of publicly funded health care – again, the Premier is constantly: “Oh, yeah, this is all good. Everybody is still going to get it paid by the government. Don't you worry. This is fear and smear by the NDP, blah, blah, blah.” He will acknowledge that this is what's happening. He's an advocate for private delivery of publicly funded services. I think he's actually an advocate for both, but we'll get into that in a moment. But when you do that, what we are also doing is that we are building an infrastructure that allows this province to move to private funding much more quickly.

We all know – some people over there may know. I'm assuming you all know – you probably got briefed in caucus, in cabinet – that there is a very important court decision that is under way in B.C. right now. If that decision goes the way of the privatizers, if that decision goes the way of the corporations, if that decision goes the way of people who believe it's their fundamental right to use their wealth to queue-jump and to have two tiers of health care in our country, if it goes their way, then we in Alberta will be well set up to facilitate the accelerated move to privately funded health care

through the infrastructure that this bill facilitates the construction of. So it's really not good.

The final reason why moving towards private delivery of publicly funded services is not a good idea is because it actually opens the door for more opportunities for fraud. I want to walk members through some of the details of what is on the public record with respect to the Cambie clinic in B.C., which, of course, is the clinic that is leading this drive to privatize our health care, rip up the Canada Health Act, and end medicare as we all know it.

Back in May 2007 in B.C. the Medical Services Commission, which is an arm of the provincial government, received complaints that 30 patients at the Cambie clinic had been billed between \$400 and \$17,000 each for services which were supposed to be completely publicly funded. Remember that everyone says: "Don't worry if it's privately delivered. It's all okely-dokely. You still won't have to pay for it. The government will pay for it." But they discovered that 30 patients had reported this.

The Cambie clinic then immediately lawyered up, and they fought the government for five years to stop the government from doing an audit of their clinic. Ultimately, after five years of court battles, they lost, and the government was able to go in and do an audit of what the Cambie clinic had been doing, this so-called innocent private provider of publicly funded services. What they found was quite considerable.

First, they found illegal billings amounting to nearly half a million dollars over a period of less than 30 days. They also found about \$66,000 in overlapping claims to the Medical Services Commission, or the government. They also found that within this clinic they forced their patients to sign a waiver saying that they would not seek reimbursement for publicly funded services that they were forced to pay for privately. They also forced their patients to sign a nondisclosure agreement, and it was concluded that it was done in a way that there was no actual sort of objectivity or real consent around them signing that agreement.

Then, after that had been found, further accusations surfaced around the fact that the Cambie clinic had been double-billing. It was then that the Cambie clinic rushed off and lawyered up again and decided to challenge the whole legislative regime around public health care in B.C., and that is the matter that is now before the courts.

Clearly, you can see how this example, this private delivery thing, is not always as innocent as the Premier would have us believe. In fact, there are tremendous opportunities for fraud and abuse, and that doesn't even amount to the whole issue of having somebody in the clinic getting a publicly funded service and then being hard sold or upsold on privately insured services that they're told they have to get in order to get reasonable access to the publicly funded services. The mechanisms through which these clinics can force or influence or persuade people to make decisions against their best interests because they're in vulnerable positions are unending.

**4:00**

You might say to me: "Well, you know, come on. This is just one bad actor. Just because it happened in this one bad case, we shouldn't imagine that that's what happens when we engage in private delivery of publicly funded health care." You know, you're right. Maybe it is just one way-off, weird bad actor. But here's the thing. On February 12, 2018, the Premier was speaking to the Whitecourt chamber of commerce, and he held up the Cambie clinic as an example of how things should be done. Then in the UCP's election platform they quoted from the head of the Cambie clinic, saying that this is how things should be done; this is the way we should manage our publicly funded health care.

So this is not just one bad actor whose audit disclosed numerous irregularities designed to, at the very best, take too much money out of the public system in order to fund their profit margin at the expense of taxpayers and the quality of care. No, this is not one bad actor. This is someone that the Premier has intentionally aligned himself with, up to and including the fact that this fellow's attack on privately funded health care, this fellow's desire to drive through the principles of medicare, this fellow's desire to rip up the Canada Health Act and the court case that he is leading is being spearheaded by an organization in Calgary that the Premier's principal secretary used to work for.

Let's be very clear. When the members opposite suggest we are doing fear and smear and all those things: no, we're not. We are simply doing responsible investigation, transparency, and opposition and warning Albertans that they have a government that is far, far too interested in private health care. This is why this issue of enhancing the opportunities for private delivery of public health care is something that all Albertans should be worried about.

Here's another thing that this bill does which is striking. It sets up an opportunity here in Alberta for the agency or body that bills directly to the government, to AHS, to no longer be just a doctor or professional association that is a creature of a doctor or a dentist. It is now the case that a publicly traded corporation can stand in the stead of a doctor in its relationship with the government of Alberta. If this bill passes, that's what it will do.

Now, I will say that there's one teeny, little section in that part of the legislation that at this point prevents the practice of what's referred to as dual practice. I won't get into a long explanation of it, but were that one little subsection to be removed, then the floodgates would be opened and we'd be full-on dealing with privately funded health care. Right now that subsection is still in there for the moment. But in the meantime it does allow for the government of Alberta to contract with corporations; let's just say Telus. I say Telus because of course Telus has already successfully convinced the government to market their Babylon program. You know, we'll talk a bit about that in a moment. It allows for Telus to become, essentially, your doctor.

You'll say: "Oh, no, no. They're just going to pay the doctors. We still have the relationship with the doctor." Just to be perfectly clear, that is not the way it will necessarily work. The doctor will work for Telus. Your relationship will be with Telus. Telus will own your private health information. You may not have any right to see the same doctor that you saw yesterday for your chronic condition next week. You will see the doctor that Telus suggests that you should see. Second, apart from the issues of privatization, it fundamentally breaks the relationship between patient and doctor, and it injects a corporate, for-profit, publicly traded entity in between that relationship.

Let me just point out that as much as we've already outlined our concern about the future of the College of Physicians & Surgeons under the consequences of this election as well as the decisions made to date by this government, we aren't suggesting, I mean, that the College of Physicians & Surgeons is itself at risk right now under this government and this legislation. The reality is that they still do govern physicians in terms of their ethics and their professional practices. But do you know who's not governed by the College of Physicians & Surgeons? Telus. So they will not be doing that.

Then we get into a situation like this. You go into your local corner store Telus provider of family medicine. You go in, you see your salaried doctor, you get your exam or whatever, and then suddenly you're getting e-mails about wellness programs. Suddenly they're trying to sell you technology to allow you to be tracking your health from home. Suddenly your doctor is telling you: well,



I'd love to see you, but if you don't have this at-home, remote blood pressure monitor, I just don't know that I can continue to treat you. Anyway, I mean, that's just a very bare minimum of the examples.

The new opportunities for advertising and pressure sales and merging of publicly insured and privately insured services and the complete reorganization and corporatization and digitalization of the patient-doctor relationship are endless under this new regime. You know, I'll be told, "Oh, well, you're just making things up, you're seeing ghosts, and blah, blah, blah," the standard gaslighting strategies that are on page 1 of the UCP government's strategy document. Nonetheless, this is true, and we know it's happening. We've seen it happen in other jurisdictions. I've been in meetings where this model has been pitched to me very transparently by people who will benefit significantly from the consequences of this bill being passed, and they will benefit in exactly the way that I'm describing because that's the way they described it to me when they pitched it to me.

This is a real thing, and it is, again, an opportunity to significantly grow the infrastructure and change the infrastructure around the delivery of health care in Alberta so that (a) we can have the Cambie clinic model of fudging the numbers and fudging the strategies and fudging how we deliver health care under the Canada Health Act at every possible opportunity, and (b) we can have a beautiful infrastructure there the minute anybody is successful at ultimately challenging legislation that attempts to stop this kind of exploitation of our health care system, exploitation of the vulnerability Albertans feel when they are ill and seeking care from their doctor. This bill creates that problem.

We are absolutely against this idea of creating an opportunity for corporations to either break the relationship between doctors and the AMA, with no disrespect to the AMA, but, even more importantly, break the relationship between doctors and their patients. That's what this bill invites.

If I can just sort of, you know, go back to first principles. First principles are that Albertans and Canadians care deeply for the principle of publicly funded health care based on need and not based on the depth and breadth of your pocketbook or your credit card limits. They believe everybody, as a fundamental human right, should have access to health care. It is a classic Conservative strategy to starve the health care system to create a small group of people who will start clamouring for the right to buy their way to the top of the queue, to queue-jump, to have two tiers. It's a strategy we can see from miles away, and this government is obviously embarking on that strategy with their significant cuts to health care.

**4:10**

I have to say this every time I talk about health care. I'm reminded again about the disingenuous nature of the MacKinnon report – I just need to throw that out there again – and her constant complaining about how Albertans spend more per capita on health care than Ontario, Quebec, and B.C. You know, anybody who knows anything about this stuff knows that volume is a big driver of this. Do you know who we spend less than per capita on health care? Every other province in the country. Why? Because they're smaller. Why do we spend more than B.C., Ontario, and Quebec? Because they're bigger. It's that simple, yet the Premier and others over there have been dining out on that little misleading statement since MacKinnon first came out with her rather sloppily concocted, nonexpert sort of recycled reports in many cases of unproven or discredited ideas. I just needed to throw that in there.

That being said, using that as cover, what this government has done is embark on an aggressive attack on our health care system, which I outlined at the beginning of this discussion. Let us be clear. That is part and parcel of a process whereby you then try to create

an interest on the part of those who can afford it to have the right to buy their way to the top of the line. I don't even really necessarily blame some of those people because when your loved one is in distress, you just want them to get better, but the way for them to get better is to have a properly supported, publicly funded health care system, and the way you do that is that you understand that the best way to do it is for us to come together and work together in a public system in a strategic way. The more you fracture it and you pull pieces out and then you try to claim that we've just saved money: that's a completely illogical argument. It's flawed because you're not taking into account the overall amount that's being spent.

If you want proof of that, just look south of the border. Overall, they spend twice as much per capita than we do on health care, and their outcomes are abysmal – abysmal – not only compared to ours but compared to, you know, countries that you would not otherwise use as an example; for instance, Cuba and many others. It's quite shocking how poor the performance measures are overall in the U.S. for infant mortality rate and the age of mortality, and those are numbers that you can't fudge. Even the Fraser Institute can't fudge those numbers. The reality is that we know that they are spending way more money and getting far less health, and the reason is because they keep selling off their health care system to many varied organizations looking for ways to make money off it.

Ultimately, this bill is about that act, and that act is a betrayal of the trust of Albertans, who were promised that they would have a government that would protect and improve the quality of their public health care and instead have gotten a government that has pretty much not stopped the attack on health care since they were elected in the spring of 2019.

**Mr. Yao:** Point of order.

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

A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j), I mean, these allegations by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, these false, unavowed motives about privatizing health care, about the Americanization of health care – her rant for the last 10 minutes has been actually inappropriate and misleading. I recognize why they want to do this, say these things in the House, hoping to slip them by so they can clip it and write these parts as if it was reality, but in truth, again, the rant for the last 10 minutes has just been discrediting information and falsely demonstrating some things that we're trying to do. We're not trying to Americanize the system; we're trying to empower the physicians to provide the good services that they provide.

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will try to respond as best as possible since it's really not clear what this point of order is even supposed to be about, which is my first point as to why it's not a point of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was quite clearly referring to a series of facts, a series of actions of the government and her interpretation of those facts, which is, as far as I can tell, what we do here in this place in general, refer to facts and interpretation and evidence. She cited multiple studies. She cited multiple historical events, things that have been done. It's not actually even clear to me what exactly the statement

was about. The fact that this is a move away from public health care to privately delivered health care is, I think, directly in evidence.

I don't think there's a point of order here. It's quite clearly a matter of debate, and I'm sorry if the hon. member finds that offensive, but that is what we do here in this place.

**The Acting Speaker:** I am wondering if the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is attempting to add new information to the point of order.

**Mr. Yao:** I just noticed that they did mention that they were working off statements and facts. If they could table those statements and facts and your calculations on expenses in one province versus other provinces . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on this matter. It is the Speaker's ruling at this time that this is not a point of order. It is a matter of debate.

I think that it is timely that this point of order was called given the ruling on the point of order during question period. I think we all listened to that ruling when the then Speaker of the House referred to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 639, where

a member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order, which it looks like this potentially could be frightfully close to.

If the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition could please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, I very much enjoyed outlining the evidence and the history and the legislation, all of which point to a very comprehensive effort to corporatize and to Americanize and to ultimately lay out the doormat, the welcome mat, for subsequent decisions that might be made to invite more privately funded health care into Alberta.

Let me just say, as I said, that we're in a pandemic. Now more than ever Albertans understand the fundamental importance of a publicly accessible, appropriately funded health care system where people get the care they need based on their needs, not based on their credit limit. It is absolutely imperative that we stop this effort to move away from those values when we are at a time when so many Albertans are feeling insecure about the overall level of health throughout this province because of this pandemic.

We've learned through this pandemic – the fundamental principle that we talk about in this pandemic is, you know, that we should be protecting each other, we should be wearing masks to protect each other, and we should be supporting our public health care to protect each other. We should not be looking for ways for people who have more to get more at the expense of those who have less, who are then forced to have less and get less. At this time we've learned that we are strongest when we come together and we work together without regard to income, power, influence, all those things.

Ensuring that we have a stable, well-funded, professional, modern, innovative public health care system is not only important for the quality of health enjoyed by seniors, enjoyed by people with chronic health problems, enjoyed by our children; it's also important for our future economic growth and for our ability to relaunch economically. One of our strengths as Albertans is that we offer an incredible place for people to live and to work and, ultimately, to invest. If we embark upon a race to the bottom with respect to the quality of care received by Albertans such that we can

no longer offer that as an attraction with respect to the province, we will also undersell ourselves there.

Most importantly, I've just got to say that medicare matters to all Canadians. Medicare matters to Albertans. The Premier made a commitment. He signed a document at one point – it was Plexiglas, but it was, you know, meant to signify a document – that said that he would protect our public health care. This bill does not protect our public health care, and that is why it should be referred to committee so that it can be substantially rewritten and we can actually put protections in place, both in terms of public delivery and also adequate, fulsome funding, to make sure that all Albertans have the kind of health care system that we need when we should ever become ill or in need of other medical attention.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:20

Bill 32

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

Member Loyola moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, be amended by deleting all of 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.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment July 21: Mr. Dang]

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has risen to join debate.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 32, the rather disingenuously named Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020. This is a bill that has seen much debate in this House so far, and I anticipate it is going to see much more because there are many concerning aspects of this legislation, and it's certainly not only us as the Official Opposition that is saying so. I appreciate the analysis that has been brought to this bill by many individuals and indeed experts in law and the discussion that has been brought forward about what the government's intentions actually are with this bill.

Indeed, one of those analyses I've had the opportunity to take a look at recently was posted on the University of Calgary Faculty of Law Ablawg blog by Mr. Colin Feasby. Now, let's be clear. Mr. Feasby is not, as the government likes to use in terms of an epithet or in other terms, a socialist or a loony lefty or a radical individual. Mr. Feasby is a Calgary lawyer who has appeared at all levels of court in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Federal Court of Canada, and before the Supreme Court of Canada. This is a gentleman who knows his law. He has put forward an analysis on Bill 32 with the question: Restoring Balance?

So what does Mr. Feasby have to say about this bill? Well, he notes that it does seem to be

the fulfillment of a UCP campaign promise . . . to give union members a choice as to whether their union dues are used for . . . what this government will have the opportunity to find as . . . political purposes.

I'm sure they will be incredibly objective in making those decisions.

The ostensible purpose of the opt-in provision . . . that this government wants to implement

... is to provide union members with agency to withhold funds from the union when such funds are used for political purposes with which [they] disagree.

Now, he also goes on to say, however:

The government has made no attempt to hide the partisan political purpose and effect of this election provision, that being the partisan purpose on behalf of the government.

This gentleman, in his objective analysis, is saying that it is clear to him that this government is not intending to bring any actual balance, that they have no interest in actually helping any union workers; they intend on helping themselves. In fact, he references particularly a tweet that was put out by the United Conservative Party of Alberta. What Mr. Feasby says is:

However, these inferences are not required because the government has made no attempt to hide the partisan political purpose and effect of this election provision. Bill 32 is designed to limit the capacity of both NDP allies ...

or anybody that might support anyone other than the UCP

... and UCP critics to publicize political messages that the UCP government does not like.

Now, of course, we've seen that already with many other instances where this government tries to use its power to bully and intimidate anyone who might suggest anything against them.

Mr. Feasby goes on to say that

Premier Jason Kenney retweeted the following tweet by the UCP explaining why the provisions of Bill 32 permit union members to prevent their dues from being used for political [purposes].

That tweet from the United Conservative Party of Alberta says:

If groups like the AFL, that are embedded in the NDP constitution, want to use dues collected from workers to oppose pipelines and run big campaigns, their members deserve a choice.

Mr. Feasby goes on to say:

This UCP tweet, and others like it, make it clear that Bill 32 targets unions because of their historical support for the NDP and their opposition to UCP policy positions.

It's clear in Mr. Feasby's analysis that this is not about the government wanting to restore an impartial balance, to empower workers in general. It is about specifically them looking to target anyone who may wish to express a political opinion other than their own.

Mr. Feasby goes on to say:

The UCP government has also signalled that it may increase or do away with limits on third party election expenses ... which would allow unfettered advertising by private interests during the election period.

Here he's referring to Bill 29. He notes that it

significantly loosens restrictions on political contributions and third party spending activities in local elections and may foreshadow similar changes ... for election finance at the Provincial level.

He says that if that were to come to pass,

the combined effect of undermining the capacity of unions to make political expenditures and removing the limits that constrain both union and corporate spending will tilt the electoral playing field in favour of the UCP and its monied allies.

To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Feasby is a neutral and independent party, and he is making a very clear observation about what, in his view, is an attempt, through this bill and others that have been brought forward by this government, to tilt the electoral playing field. Now, this government may feel that they are more representative of workers in this province, but that does not give them the right to try to tilt the electoral playing field in their favour.

Mr. Feasby goes on to look at a number of different cases related to such changes across the Canadian political system and in other jurisdictions. He looks at examples in the U.S. and the U.K. He

looks at some cases that have been before the Supreme Court of Canada. He talks in general about third-party involvement in election campaigns.

He also notes that

Bill 32 limits the section 2(b) Charter right of unions to freedom of expression by reducing their capacity to make political expenditures. The UCP government will no doubt contend that the limit on freedom of expression of unions is justified by the autonomy given to workers to make a determination whether they will fund union political activities.

But he asks the question:

Doesn't that autonomy also further the purposes of the Charter rights of freedom of expression and association?

He says:

Absent the naked partisan purposes of Bill 32 ...

Those are his words, Mr. Speaker, "the naked partisan purposes of Bill 32."

... this might be an appropriate approach. But what is a court to do when a law restricting political activity is aimed [specifically] at the government's political opponents?

He suggests that

legislators have an inherent conflict of interest in enacting laws that govern the political process. A party that controls the legislature is subject to the temptation to institute electoral laws that favour its [own] re-election.

Mr. Feasby is obviously not a fan of the direction this government wants to go.

4:30

His conclusion is that this is likely to lead to a constitutional challenge, that Bill 32, in fact, provides

an opportunity for a court to explain how structural considerations may be weighed in [a] Charter analysis. A court evaluating Bill 32 from a structural perspective will have to ask whether the government's ostensible purpose of promoting worker autonomy could have been achieved through a measure [say] such as an opt-out regime that would have a less drastic impact on union capacity to participate in political debate ... [and] whether the enhancement of the expressive and associational interests of union members outweighs the toll that the measure exacts on political competition.

He notes that the government's conflict of interest in enacting Bill 32 requires considering how that balance would be best achieved.

In my view, Mr. Speaker, this government is nowhere close to balance with this bill. Indeed, what we see, as Mr. Feasby, in fact, himself noted, is that this is a part of a decided agenda on the part of this government to in many aspects and in many ways tilt the electoral playing field in its favour. We see this government making no attempt to ensure balance for workers in any other situation or any other employer.

Of course, we know there are a number of other provisions within this bill and concerns, which we have brought forward. I spoke extensively the other day about some of the concerns around averaging agreements, well, averaging impositions, as they will be under this government now. Of course, workers will no longer have any say in the averaging set-up that will be imposed on them by their employer for up to 12 months, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I recall that at the time there was a member in the government that spoke up and said, "Well, they're employers," meaning that, I guess, if you don't like it, you lump it, and you can leave it. I think we owe a bit more respect and support for workers than that.

Indeed, we know they had just changed the rules around averaging agreements last year, so I do wonder which workers this government actually spoke with in the interim period to determine that that change was not good enough or that it had to be changed further to disempower workers, to give them fewer rights and less

opportunity to actually engage in decisions that have profound impacts on them personally in the work that they do.

Indeed, we have to wonder about many of the provisions that this government has placed here. In the consultation on this how many workers did they actually speak to in making some of these changes, in making it easier for employers to hire 13- and 14-year-olds, in putting more onus on parents to have to watch out for what their children may be asked to do or what they may be pressured to do in a working environment, particularly at a time when we are dealing with issues around COVID-19? Indeed, changes like allowing employers to choose the lowest amount payable for holiday pay: whereas it used to be an average of the wages of four weeks preceding the holiday, now employers can choose the last four-week pay period closest to the holiday that allows for a cheaper option. It creates more red tape, of course, than having to choose which option they're going to use and which direction they're going to move in.

But, again, it means less for workers, which seems to be what this government considers to be balancing the scales. Apparently, in this government's view workers in Alberta have just had it too good for too long. Indeed, that's what we see when they want to extend the requirement of paying out wages upon termination to up to 21 to 31 days after employment ends from the current three to 10 days. Triple, Mr. Speaker. In the time of COVID-19, when people may be facing multiple layoffs or challenges in finding work, this government wants to make it harder for people to be able to get by.

There are many concerns that we have with this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I know that we are going to have the opportunity to debate more and more of them. I appreciate the work my hon. colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has done on this file as the Official Opposition critic for labour.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for five minutes of questions or comments. I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen on that.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre was mid-sentence. I was eagerly listening to his comments on this and would like to know more about what he has to say on this particular issue.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie. Indeed, as I was saying, I deeply appreciate the work my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, the Official Opposition critic for labour, has done on this bill and the many workers she has consulted with, the many individuals who are affected by this bill.

Of course, we have seen the incredible disrespect in general that this government has for workers. I just think of the example of how they have taken the pensions of so many Albertans and are forcing those workers to have them invested through a particular agency, through AIMCo, and again how there was no consultation, none whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, with workers in how that process would go forward and indeed in removing representation that was duly elected by those workers to help oversee how those pensions were handled. It's par for the course, what we've seen with this government, and clearly their view of the sweeping powers that they believe employers should have and indeed themselves.

I guess we see that that's how they approach the situation with doctors in the province of Alberta, with so many of the others that work in the public service, in the health care sector, how they seem to want to move doctors to be waged employees, perhaps so that

they can better ensure the kind of imbalance that they want to put forward through this bill on them as well. I'm deeply concerned about what this is going to mean for workers in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, given that many of the changes that were brought forward under our government by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods merely brought Alberta up to the Canadian average, just approaching the Canadian mainstream, when it comes to occupational health and safety, employment standards, basic labour rights. Just coming up to the Canadian norm: this government considered that too much of an imbalance.

That is concerning. I can only image what future plans this government may have after Bill 32 and in what other ways they may look to disempower Alberta workers, to take away their ability to have a collective voice and instead tilt the balance of power, as they seem so fond of, towards major corporations, towards big employers, towards themselves, Mr. Speaker, and their own, to quote again from the blog I was speaking of, moneyed interests.

4:40

The Premier spoke today about special interest groups. Well, we know very well which ones have the ear of this government and indeed have informed legislation like Bill 32. It is not the workers that this government is looking to support, Mr. Speaker. It's, first of all, themselves and, second of all, their friends and allies. That's why these changes exist here in Bill 32, and that is why myself and my colleagues in the Official Opposition will be speaking against them and will continue to stand up for workers in the province of Alberta.

Indeed, we'll vote, as I would encourage all members of this Assembly, against Bill 32 and maintain an actual balance in protection of workers, in protection of their rights, in protection of their collective voice, in their right to a safe workplace, to fair treatment, and indeed their ability to provide for themselves.

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

Are there any hon. members looking to join? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to members of the Assembly. It's always an honour to rise in this place and to be able to put on record the arguments that I think need to be made to legislation. At this point we're debating Bill 32, what's currently titled Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, with specific reference to a referral amendment, which I'm going to read for my own reminding. Also, I think many of us aren't keeping a lot of paper on us these days. The motion for referral is: "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."

Even though I've been a member of this place for more than five years, this is only my second year serving on standing committees or committees of this Assembly, given that in my prior role I wasn't a private member, so I didn't have that opportunity. I've been on Public Accounts and now on the committee that's reviewing Bill 10, the public health statutes amendment act, I believe it is, and I have to say that even though we have times in committee where it can get frustrating and where maybe either side doesn't feel heard, I appreciate the environment that is created in committees and the opportunity to dig a little deeper than we typically have in this place when it comes to engaging subject matter.

I attended a private members' bill committee meeting recently, and one of the things that I appreciate is that both parties can invite folks to come and give testimony or give arguments to the merits or

the weaknesses of said legislation. That, to me, is what true representative democracy but also just democratic engagement looks like, an opportunity to bring various perspectives together and to be able to talk about strengths and drawbacks from – I know when we're standing here we're talking about bills, but what we're talking about is changing the law, right? We're here to make substantial changes and to change the way that our province is governed, and I would like us to be able to have full confidence that when we make changes, they are for the better.

I don't have that confidence with this bill. I know that we've received a great deal of correspondence, not as much as we've received about health care or parks and then, particularly right now, around education. Thank you to my constituency manager, Tonya, who I know has been on the phone nonstop responding to parents and to staff who have grave concerns about the risky nonplan that was proposed yesterday. Please feel free to reach out to any of the MLAs in either caucus. Obviously, you have your own MLA, but a lot of the people who are reaching out to us right now don't feel that their MLA is currently representing them on educational issues, so they're reaching out to us on that. We certainly have seen that as well in terms of labour concerns. I know that the constituency assistant for the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who happens to be our critic for labour, has also received a tremendous amount of feedback from members of the public with regard to their concerns with this legislation.

While I appreciate that MLAs and their constituency staff work to gather feedback and inform the debate we have in this place, the debate we have in this place is under different parameters in terms of time and engagement than the kind of engagement that we have through our standing committees. I think the one about economic futures makes perfect sense. The Premier tied jobs and the economy together during the last election campaign quite successfully. I think that anyone who saw, you know, different graphics or read different headlines knows that he talked about jobs and the economy as one packaged item together. This is a significant change to jobs and to the way people work and the way people can organize or not organize in this province in this legislation as well as the rights that employees have in their own workplaces.

There has already been some engagement on this in the public. One piece that I am going to reference at this point in the debate is written by David Doorey. It was earlier in July, on July 8. In COVID times, time sometimes moves slower and sometimes moves faster, but it was, you know, less than two weeks ago. The title of the piece, which I will table tomorrow – *Hansard*, my apologies. I've been quoting a number of things lately, and I get those nice e-mails from *Hansard* saying: can we get the correct reference to this so that we can cite it properly in *Hansard*? I really do appreciate their dedication to making sure that they have an accurate reflection of what's said in this House and the evidence that is backing up arguments. But I'll also table this document in accordance with our standing orders and with good record management.

The article I'm referring to is Alberta Tests Right-Wing Republican Inspired Labour Laws. That's an interesting title, but the writer – again, Mr. Doorey – goes on to talk about what the current state is of union coverage, for example, as one of the areas that he's talking about, because there are a number of changes here that seem to be part of a Republican playbook south of the border around creating environments where fewer people are members of unions. He talks a little bit about the history of union coverage by province between 2014 and 2018, so not that long, and how in 2014 it was 22.1 per cent of Alberta workers that were part of a union and that in 2018 it was 24.5 per cent. I wouldn't exactly say that was a huge swing in the volume of the percentage of workers

represented by unions. It was 2.4 per cent, not a huge dramatic swing as the title of this bill refers to in terms of restoring balance.

Still, at 24.5 per cent Alberta had the lowest rates of unionization of provinces, the national average being 30.1 per cent; Newfoundland and Labrador, 37.3 per cent; the highest, Quebec, 38.4 per cent; Prince Edward Island, 32 per cent; Nova Scotia, 29.7 per cent; New Brunswick, 29.8 per cent; Ontario, 26.3 per cent; Manitoba, actually quite high as well, 34.2 per cent; Saskatchewan, neighbours not too far from us, 33.5 per cent; and British Columbia, 29.1 per cent. Those are the 2018 numbers.

Again, to say that the difference from 22.1 per cent in 2014 under PC laws going to 24.5 per cent – again, still far below the national average, almost 6 per cent below the national average. I would say that for the bill authors to say this is about balance, saying that the pendulum swung, you know, 2.4 per cent, and therefore we need to swing back so substantially that we're going to do the kinds of changes that the Premier has very boastfully spoken to in this place around definitely taking away labour rights, I think it's an overstatement at best and I think is parliamentary words that are appropriate in this context. At worst, I would say that it is an outright attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of ordinary working people in this province.

4:50

Now, when the Premier talked about jobs and the economy, he didn't talk about attacking the union and seeing more than 50,000 full-time jobs leave our province between the time he brought in a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway and the beginning of the pandemic. We know that even more jobs have been lost since the beginning of the pandemic. In prepandemic times the track record of jobs and the economy was certainly not what was promised in the election period or, really, the two years leading up to the election period by the Premier.

This bill will in no way create more jobs. What it does do – there are a number of changes around when people are fired, how quickly they'll receive their final pay, and when people don't reach an agreement around averaging, how one will be imposed on them. Those things aren't about job creation. Those things definitely aren't about balance. Those things are, in my estimation, meeting specific directives advocated by specific organizations and employers. I can almost assure you that no worker groups, no organizations that represent workers were advocating for these kinds of changes to put – I think it's been said – \$100 million back in the pockets of employers, although if we had a chance to go to committee, maybe we could probe this a little more deeply. Of course, we know where that money is coming from; it's coming from the folks that employers pay, those being workers.

I have to say that that is one of the early sort of pieces I wanted to address around the balance arguments that keep coming from members of the government caucus.

One of the things the author of this article again talks about a little bit is 26.1(1), which refers to:

26.1(1) In setting union dues, assessments or initiation fees, a trade union must indicate

- (a) the amount or percentage of the union dues, assessments or initiation fees that relates to political activities and other causes, including
  - (i) general social causes or issues

Let me give you an example of one of those. I often go on Labour Day to – if you've ever been, it's in Little Italy in Edmonton. There's a Labour Day barbecue that's done to support members but is focused and is situated where it is because there's a lot of poverty in that area. It's Labour Day, so it's around the time kids are coming back to school, and there's always a huge lineup. It's one of the

best-attended free summer events, I think, we have that really encourages a lot of people who sometimes, when you're walking around downtown, are living in the shadows, but at this Labour Day barbecue they are celebrated. They are the focus of this barbecue, and that's why it's held in a park where there are a lot of people who struggle with food insecurity and home insecurity. It's an opportunity for everyone to come together and have a picnic, a barbecue together. I'm not exactly sure what that's going to look like this year, of course, to ensure safety for all. But that's one of the social issues that this bill will be hurting.

"The amount or percentage of the union dues, assessments or initiation fees that relates to political activities and other causes, including . . . general social causes or issues." Feeding hungry people, Mr. Speaker: that's a general social cause or issue. Making sure that workers have an opportunity on their day, where we celebrate labour and the contributions of labour and of working people, to give back to those who are less fortunate: general social causes or issues. That definitely was not in the election platform.

"Charities or non-governmental organizations." Here's another one. I know that there's a labour school camp that's set up for kids of people who are part of these workplaces, who want to have an opportunity for their kids to get together and go to summer camp. Some of their dues go towards running this fun summer camp for kids. There are a lot of kids in the province that don't have the ability. Their parents don't have the extra few hundred dollars to be able to send them to summer camp, but collectively these labour organizations have decided that they are going to jointly contribute their funds to ensure that their members' kids get a chance to go to summer camp.

At that summer camp the kids have an opportunity to understand a little bit what negotiations look like. For example, the last day of camp there's always a dance or there has typically been a dance, and the adults get to decide what the dance is going to look like. They say: the dance will end at 8 o'clock, you will have a playlist determined by the organizers of the dance that comes from the 1980s – very good music in the 1980s – and there will be no snacks. The kids, of course, say: well, that doesn't sound like much fun; we'd like to be able to stay at the dance till 10 o'clock, we'd like to have music that's contemporary that we actually like listening to, and we'd like to have some treats. They develop a list of things that they'd like to be able to advocate for collectively as children to make this experience a more enjoyable one than having to sit around listening to their parents' records and with no refreshments or snacks.

They do this negotiation back and forth, and it's really an opportunity for these kids to understand what it is that their parents are doing in their workplaces when they get involved in organizing and helping one another, but it's also for kids to understand that they have a voice, that they have an opportunity to engage, and that when adults direct things to them . . . [Ms Hoffman's speaking time expired] Time flies.

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

**Member Loyola:** I was appreciating so much that story, Mr. Speaker, that I'd really love it if the Member for Edmonton-Glenora could continue, please.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Here I was hoping that the member was going to maybe say that his kids went to that camp. If they haven't, I hope that one day they have the opportunity to go because I think a lot of what makes the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie such an effective advocate are things that he learned in his

experiences advocating for himself and his co-workers through the labour movement.

So definitely giving kids an opportunity to know that when somebody in a position of power gives you a set of rules, you can actually work collectively to come up with strategies to create a better environment for yourself and those that you are working with. They actually go through how you would raise a concern with somebody who can help advocate for you. So who would be a shop steward in this situation? Another one of the kids, right? Another one of the kids would come forward and say: "You know, I'll go back and forth, and I'll help advocate for the things you want. Oh, you want music from the 2000 to 2010 range? Okay. How does everyone else feel about that? Do you want music from 2000 to 2010, or do you want music from, like, 2018 to 2020?" Right? They get very specific in figuring out what the collective will is of these children to have a fun dance. All of these strategies that they have relate to nongovernment organizations, charities, general social causes or issues, sending kids to summer camp.

"Organizations or groups affiliated with or supportive of a political party." Again, there are a whole lot of things that could fit into that category, but this is another thing that the government is taking away from the ability of democratically elected union leaders, labour leaders, to be able to work on behalf of their members and in collaboration with their members to advocate for things that will make their rights be upheld and heard.

"Any activities prescribed by the regulations," it goes on to say. That could be a whole additional swath of things that we don't even know and that will never be debated in this place because they will be passed in a room down the hall that only certain people are allowed into, and it definitely doesn't include private members or the opposition in those discussions.

These are some of the types of substantial changes – this is just one very small piece of the legislation – that I wanted to highlight at this point in second, where we're considering the referral. I think that committees can be places of benefit to all members and definitely of benefit to the laws that we're here to determine, ensuring, I think, that private members of both parties have an opportunity to engage in bringing folks forward who understand the implications.

One of the favourite phrases of former members in this place – I'm trying to think if any of them are here right now, actually – was about unintended consequences, right? Think about all the unintended consequences for your legislation. Cancelling summer camp, stopping a barbecue for people who have food insecurity and live in the core of our city: these are the consequences that are listed in this bill. I definitely know that the Premier, when he was campaigning to be Premier, didn't say that he was going to, you know, take away the ability of people to donate their money to feed hungry people on the street or take away the ability for working people to send their kids to summer camp, yet these are some of the implications of this one very small piece of this bill.

5:00

Again, it's a substantial bill. It's a bill that's framed in what I would say is a false argument around there being imbalance when it comes to workplace organization. Again, Alberta still has the lowest union-covered positions as a percentage of total workplace positions in the country, far from the national average of 30.1 per cent. I think that we have a lot to do as a society. Is this really where this Assembly should be spending its time, on attacking the rights of democratically elected folks to be able to engage in charitable events and support nongovernmental organizations? I would disagree.

Knowing that I have about 20 seconds, I want to mention one other union-initiated charitable act, and that was putting a playground at the Glenrose rehabilitation hospital. Unions collected funds to be able to build a playground there so that kids who have to live in the hospital and experience rehab have somewhere fun to be for some time during the day. Or when kids come to visit their grandparents at the Glenrose, they can go downstairs together and play on the swings. Grandparents can help engage with their children. We're taking this away.

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

We are on REF1 to Bill 32. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join debate on – I can't remember what you said – REF1, which is, of course, the referral motion for Bill 32, referring this to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I'd like to speak in favour of this referral motion.

I'd just like to begin by talking a bit about what my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora just said, about sort of the false premise that the purpose of this bill is to restore balance, you know, that there's too much support for unions in our province and that the employers need to have more support. Of course, there is blame put on the previous government, the government that I was in, the NDP government, that actually updated and passed legislation to make labour laws in our province actually more consistent with across the country. I just want to say that this is not restoring balance. Actually, it's taking us backwards. It's taking us backwards 20 or 30 years, and that's kind of a sad place to be. I think Alberta would want to be a leader and that we would want to be making sure that workers in our province have supports. We do want to have balance, but this isn't creating balance; this is taking us backwards, of course.

You know, I like to remember this. For members who were in the House in the last mandate of the government, when we were the government, the minister of labour at that time, currently the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, would kind of give people perspective on how long it had been since labour laws had been updated, since employment standards been had updated. She would often use some kind of example in the entertainment world. One of the things I can remember, just off the top of my head, is that she would say: well, the last time these labour/employment standards were updated was when *Beetlejuice* was in the theatres. That was back in 1988, so you can see by that, Mr. Speaker, that certainly this is false. It isn't about restoring balance; it's actually about taking us backwards.

You know, Alberta likes to be a leader, so I really challenge the government's perspective on this. This is not restoring balance; it's taking us way backwards. We already know, too – it's been mentioned already by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora – that we have some of the lowest unionization rates in the whole country here in Alberta. We've had Conservative government after Conservative government that have been union-busting. They're doing whatever they can to not support workers.

This has happened, certainly, through my career as a worker. You know, when I first started working – I mean, I think I was 12 – I waitressed in the little, small town of Valleyview. I worked many jobs through high school and then always worked through university because I paid for my own university. Certainly, my whole career in this province has been under, really, kind of backward labour laws. I was very proud of our government when we did step up and make them at least up to the average across the rest of Canada, which has more sort of up-to-date labour laws.

I just want to also talk about something that unionization does in the jurisdictions that it is in. It creates more fairness and justice – we sometimes call that equality – so people are supported to live with dignity, have incomes that are, you know, mortgage-paying incomes. They support – it's called the lighthouse effect, where even for people who are not unionized, their benefits, their salaries go up because of the advocacy for workers by unions. This is a good thing. This is a good thing, especially in Alberta, because we have, sadly – this isn't a good statistic – the greatest income inequality of any province in Canada. There are people in the top income percentages who make a significant amount of money, but especially now we can see that the middle class is being pushed down lower, so money is being pooled into fewer and fewer hands.

Unions shift that. Unions shift that because they are a collective voice that advocates for workers, and it helps with negotiation. Oftentimes corporations can be very powerful, and workers feel vulnerable. They can't, you know, speak up against it, or they're not heard when they speak up against it, so the collective voice of a union can make a really significant difference.

It's not only sort of in the concrete things like income; it's also about social justice issues. I know I've spoken in the House earlier about this, but I just want to talk more on it, and it's in keeping with the lighthouse effect. It creates more equality for diverse groups, and I want to speak specifically about women. I think this is a really important reason why this referral motion should be passed. The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future needs to really look at this legislation because there are some serious concerns.

One of the things that unions do is that they want to create a fair and just community, society within which they work, and union members volunteer to be on committees to advocate for this, to support diverse groups, to have that equality. Certainly, they've done a tremendous amount of work to advocate for women, you know, to have wage equality, gender equality, to have leadership opportunities that give really good support for that.

This, again, is a place where Alberta has some abysmal records, and that's not something I'm proud of. That's part of the reason I stepped up and ran myself. As a woman I want women to be treated fairly and have equality and justice. Certainly, that was part of the reason that I decided to run, so that I could help influence that and I could be a role model to support women in leadership. But the sad reality is that Alberta doesn't do a very good job in terms of gender equality for women. You know, it's got some significant issues.

**5:10**

I tabled earlier this week the report on the best and worst places for women to live in Canada. There's a report that comes out annually by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. What it does is that it takes the 26 largest municipalities in this country and ranks them according to, I think, five indicators regarding women and what's the best place for them to live. It looks at leadership, education, health, security, and economic security. It looks at these sort of five indices that it rates. Out of the 26, you know, Calgary and Edmonton certainly are not at the top. Edmonton does the worst. Edmonton is only at 25, 25 out of 26. It's way down low. Calgary is only slightly higher at 21 out of 26. We're far from the top. There are so many factors that are not supporting women in our country.

One of the things that unions do is that they actually elevate women's power and leadership and economic prosperity. Those two go together. When there's low unionization, guess what? Women aren't very well supported. This bill, of course, is, you know, sort of cutting at the heart of one of the things that unions do with this opt-in clause, where the members must say: "Okay. Yes, you can spend my money in this way. You can spend my money in

that way.” It’s just a fundamental part of unions, the social justice aspect. Certainly, we know that corporations have many advocacy campaigns. They don’t have this opt-in or opt-out provision.

Certainly, when I was the Minister of Seniors and Housing or when I was the minister of jobs, skills, and labour early on, I met with the Federation of Independent Business, restaurant associations, many of the corporations, and believe you me, they had lots of funds to spend on political advocacy. They had a tremendous amount. Of course, this legislation is moving to silence the voices of unions, who believe in those kinds of values like equality. They believe that workers should be supported. They believe women should have supports so that they have support to overcome some of the barriers that make it hard for women to be on equal footing with men in our society. This legislation cuts at the heart of that.

Unfortunately, if this is passed, it will make it, again, a very challenging place, one of the worst places in Canada, Edmonton and Calgary, for women to live. We don’t want to have that as our moniker, I’m sure, that this isn’t a great place for women to live, but that’s the fact. If I go into sort of the indices, what they measured in this study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, one of them is security, like security of the person. We have extremely high rates of intimate-partner violence in those two cities. We have very high rates where women are assaulted, oftentimes by their, you know, husband or their boyfriend. That is not a good indicator of women living in a healthy situation. Because of those high rates, we don’t have desirable major cities.

The economic disparity between men’s and women’s wages is also quite wide, again, some of the widest gaps in Canada. A lot of that has to do with leadership, which is another index that they looked at, which is about women in elected office. They just are looking at cities, so it’s not provincial politics. It is the cities. In Edmonton we have 15 per cent of city councillors who are women, and in Calgary 20 per cent. I mean, these are awful stats. We want women to be 50 per cent. We’re 50 per cent of the population, but we’re not in leadership, so guess what? You know, decisions are made that aren’t including women’s voices. Women need to be at the table. That is also an indicator that shows that women aren’t doing very well in our province. Also, leadership in private industry. You know, women are not CEOs of big corporations, aren’t in high-level management positions compared to other centres where women are elevated more. That is also sort of an issue with leadership. Women aren’t in those positions in our province. Compared to other provinces, we’re down the list, as I said: Calgary, the 21st and Edmonton, the 25th place to live.

I mean, in other areas, too: just having access to accredited, affordable child care, that’s a real struggle in our province. Of course, that’s essential for women so that they can, you know, hold positions in the workforce. Of course, we know that during COVID-19 the government has certainly not been very helpful to women in regard to providing those kinds of affordable, accredited child care spaces.

I’m very grateful for the work that unions have done, certainly, in our province and across the country to really give support to women, to create more equality for them. This direct assault by this government on unions will hurt that, and believe me, as I’ve just indicated, there’s a long way to go. There’s much more work to be done, and we’re far from an equal footing. Women are not on an equal footing with men. They have many more barriers. But you know what? Unions actually help women to be able to be on an equal footing. So when you’re cutting and attacking them in this legislation by having this opt-in clause, then you are undermining their ability to advocate, and that strikes at the heart of fairness.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I always appreciate the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview because you can always rest assured that you’re going to get a gender analysis, and I appreciate that we have that kind of expertise on our side. I would very much appreciate it if she could continue with her comments along those lines.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for his encouragement to keep sharing a bit about some of the comments that I had already started with.

Certainly, we know that if we go to this opting-in clause that is going to be a requirement of this legislation so that workers will have to say, “Yes, you can go ahead and work on social justice issues.” I mean, this is just a fundamental thing that unions do. But now workers will have to say: “Yes. You can do this.”

We know that this doesn’t really fit with a lot of what’s been ruled on already in court systems across the province. The Lavigne versus Ontario Public Service Employees Union decision from 1991 – that’s quite dated, Mr. Speaker; that’s been established, obviously, for quite a while – upheld the rights of unions to spend union dues on political activities. The Rand formula is a Supreme Court-imposed formula for automatic check-off of union dues. It’s not clear that this legislation is going to be compliant.

It’s just very clear that this UCP government wants to silence its critics despite it sort of giving lip service on occasion: “Oh, we care about all the voices in Alberta.” I mean, this is like a sledgehammer saying: “No, we don’t. No, we don’t. We don’t care about workers’ voices. We don’t care about people who may have, you know, less advantage, but of course we care about supporting big corporations.” Four point seven billion dollars, of course, right off the bat so that – and I’m saying this in quotes – the job creators are going to do all this great stuff. We know that hasn’t happened. Jobs have not been created. Actually, jobs have been lost, corporations have left Alberta since that time. So it’s kind of a myth. It’s this trickle-down economics theory that we know is not true. It’s been proven time and time again.

But guess what? You support workers? Where are they going to spend their money? They’re going to spend their money in the local economy. They’re going to support their neighbourhoods. They’re going to support their local stores. They’re going to make their communities robust and strong. If we can support people to have fair wages and good mortgage-paying jobs, which is what unions provide, then we’re going to have a more just and fair society.

5:20

You know, I really feel that the UCP government has it upside down. They’ve got it confused. They don’t quite understand it. I mean, I could cite several research papers that talk about that when they review economic policies of different jurisdictions, actually it creates more inequality. If we look to the south of us, the U.S., I mean, that’s an example of sort of very open, free-market, conservative values. Guess what? They have tremendous inequality there; people live a very marginal existence. The money is pooled in the hands of a few. They don’t even have access to a public health care system that is fair and responds to people in need. We don’t want to emulate a type of country that has those kinds of policies. We want an inclusive country that does make sure that everybody – it’s not about how much money you have. You’re a citizen of this country, and you have some rights as a citizen.



Supporting workers is what unions do, and I think this legislation really attacks the ability of unions to do that and to create a fair and just society. That's why it's so important that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, because it is just another union-busting bill like we've seen so many times from Conservative governments. You know, even if we look at some of the stats since the legislation was changed when our government was in power, we know – and this is work by Professor Bob Barnetson. He's a professor of labour relations at Athabasca University.

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

Joining the debate, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to offer a few comments with respect to this referral amendment. Of course, I will be speaking, like all of my friends here in the Official Opposition, in favour of referring this bill to the committee for a number of reasons that I'd like to outline. I first of all want to thank my friend from Edmonton-Riverview for her comments with respect to the important work that unions do to promote women's equality, and I'm going to touch on that issue in the speech in making my arguments in favour of referring this bill to committee.

[Mr. Long in the chair]

I have very grave concerns about the impact that Bill 32, if passed, will have on labour's ability to organize, and I want to use the video game industry as an example of a growing sector with low levels of unionization in which unions are desperately needed, Mr. Speaker. I think people will know that I've spoken passionately about video games in the past, and I think it's timely. Given the government's introduction of a \$175 million giveaway to tech companies here, I think that we can anticipate that video game companies may be some of the recipients of the grants that the government wants to dole out. There is a whole host of problems in the video game industry with the working conditions that people there experience. You know, I think it's critical to underline the fact that unions are very important for making sure that workers in any industry have safe and fair working conditions as well as decent wages.

You know, anybody who has followed the video game industry in the last few years knows that there have been extensive, widely reported problems with working conditions in that industry, and I want to take a moment to highlight a couple of somewhat recent examples. Now, in 2019 a local company, BioWare, which is a subsidiary of Electronic Arts, which, I think, is the largest video game company in the world – if it's not the largest, it's definitely one of the largest – released a video game called Anthem, which was widely anticipated by the legions of BioWare fans distributed throughout the world. I think it's charitable to say that the video game Anthem was a crushing disappointment to the people who were looking forward to that video game, Mr. Speaker. There were a number of problems with the game. It was essentially broken when it was shipped out and a colossal failure, so colossal, in fact, that video game journalists investigated the reasons behind the colossal failure that was BioWare's Anthem.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

One of the things they found in their investigation was that BioWare has a long history of what they call crunch. Now, they don't call it crunch at BioWare. I think they have, you know, some budding UCP issues managers working at the company. They call it BioWare magic. Towards the end of the production of any video

game the workers at BioWare work incredibly ridiculous hours to meet the deadline to put that video game out. It was because of this long-standing culture of crunch that Anthem was a failure. People were working too hard with tasks that were impossible to meet by these deadlines. As a result, Anthem was widely panned by many video game critics. It was a crushing disappointment to the many BioWare fans, as I said.

One can't help but wonder. If the workers at BioWare had reasonable working conditions that had been negotiated on their behalf by a union negotiating a collective agreement, perhaps the working conditions would have been a bit more tolerable, and the BioWare game Anthem would have been much better as a result. We don't know, but it's definitely suggested by the video game journalists who looked into that situation that the crunch culture that results from the tremendous pressure that management puts on nonunionized workers creates a worse product.

There is another recent example that came out in the fall of 2019, and that was with Red Dead Redemption II. Now, Red Dead Redemption II was created by Rockstar, which is another incredibly successful video game company. They created, of course, Grand Theft Auto V, which is the most successful video game in all of history. Between its release in 2015, I believe, and the end of 2018 Grand Theft Auto V has generated over \$6 billion in revenue, making it the single most successful entertainment enterprise of any kind, be that movies, video games, music. Grand Theft Auto V is the top entertainment product of all time. Yes, I can see the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is expressing shock, and I think it is shocking. It is shocking that one game can generate \$6 billion. I'm certain that the managers at AIMCo would like to know how they could generate \$6 billion in profit instead of losing \$2 billion a year, but that's another matter. That's another matter.

A number of problems, though, Mr. Speaker, with the situation is that even though a game like Grand Theft Auto V can be incredibly financially successful, make more money than any other entertainment enterprise in the history of entertainment, the people who work for Rockstar get paid scale. The people who did the voices for Grand Theft Auto V got paid a few dollars an hour, and they don't get to participate in any of the royalties. There are no royalties. They just get paid a daily rate for their work. All of those profits accrue to the management, the executive management, and the shareholders.

5:30

One can't help but wonder that if a company like Rockstar were unionized, the workers who were responsible for creating the most successful entertainment enterprise in the history of entertainment would perhaps be a little bit better off, financially speaking. I got off on a bit of a tangent there because I was talking about the culture of crunch that exists at Rockstar. When they released Red Dead Redemption II in the fall of 2019, it was very controversial because one of the cofounders of Rockstar bragged about forcing his employees to work 100-hour weeks in the lead-up to the release of that game. Then when there was a significant backlash from the video game community over his bragging about forcing his workers to work 100-hour weeks, he said: well, no, no, no, you know, we're not actually holding a gun to anybody's head; it's their choice to work these 100-hour weeks. He neglected to say that the choice was between either working a 100-hour week or losing your job, which is not the kind of choice that anybody wants to make.

So we can't help but wonder if the Rockstar workers would be better off if they were also represented by a union so that they didn't have to work these 100-hour weeks to put out a video game. People may be wondering: well, I'm sure that these 100-hour weeks are significantly leading to a product that is much better than if they

were working traditional 40-hour weeks. You know, let me remind you, Mr. Speaker and all members of the Assembly, that there is a diminishing rate of return to the work that a video game worker puts in when creating a video game, so in a 40-hour week we can get a reasonable facsimile of a horse in the case of a game like Red Dead Redemption II, but if they put in 100-hour weeks, well, we can get a slightly more realistic horse. The players' boots jingle a little bit more accurately when they get on and off the horse in the video game. These are things that are practically immaterial to the gamer's experience but have significant effects on the lives of the workers who are forced to work these 100-hour weeks to put out the game.

Rockstar was – at the time many employees came forward with some harrowing stories about suffering from symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, severe anxiety. Some, you know, claimed to suffer from suicidal ideation because their working conditions were so bad. So I can't help but wonder that if the video game industry had a much stronger union movement, workers would be protected from these kinds of incredibly trying, incredibly difficult working conditions.

I want to touch on one of the arguments that my friend from Edmonton-Riverview was making in her argument, that unions create better working conditions for women, Mr. Speaker. It has been widely reported that working conditions for women in the video game industry are absolutely abysmal. Right now Ubisoft has been rocked by scandal. Executive management all across that company has been accused of sexual harassment, sexual assault. One of the executive managers has actually been accused of luring women into his office and drugging them so that he could have sex with them. This is absolutely outrageous, and to date Ubisoft has denied any responsibility for how it has treated its female employees. Lest you think that Ubisoft is unique in the video game world – I should remind everybody that Ubisoft is also one of the largest video game producers in the world, and many of the executive managers that are wrapped up in this scandal and who've been accused of these kinds of horrible actions towards women are Canadian, which should be much to our shame.

But Ubisoft is not unique. In fact, last year, in May, 150 workers at a video game company called Riot Games walked out. Now, they're not unionized. Riot Games workers are not unionized, but they walked out because the women employees at Riot Games had long complained of sexual harassment and sexual assault. They alleged that executive management in that company would actually publicly rate female employees as to how hot they were. Not only that, they also accused Riot Games of paying women workers less money than their male counterparts were earning. When women workers tried to take Riot Games to court because Riot Games refused to acknowledge that this was a problem, they applied for and received from the state of California forced arbitration. Riot Games was hoping to just quietly settle the issue so that there was no public controversy. I think it was their hope that they could pay off these troublesome women, in their view, to be silent so that they could carry on making games with this toxic culture that they've always used.

The workers of Riot Games were not having it, Mr. Speaker. Even though they weren't unionized, 150 workers staged a very public walkout. They put down their tools, and they quit making video games. That definitely got the attention of the managers of Riot Games. When 150 people walked out and stopped working, all of a sudden Riot Games was very keen to take action to rectify this toxic culture of misogyny and sexual assault. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to research how things have ended. But at least Riot Games was forced to publicly admit that they had a problem and that they were able to deal with it. Now, that is a company

where the workers organized themselves and staged this kind of walkout.

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

Standing order 29(2)(a) is available, and the hon. member who caught my eye is the hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been listening to the debate, and I want to thank the hon. members opposite for weighing in on this issue. I have spoken to my point of view in regard to the referral amendment earlier, but I wanted to take an opportunity to clarify certain items that have been raised by the members opposite. I won't be able to get to them all in this short period of time, but I wanted to touch on a few.

The first I wanted to comment on I think were comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who, you know, suggested that the hundred million dollars of savings associated with making a change to the timing of termination pay would be coming out of the pockets of employees. Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that that is simply not the case. The hundred million dollars in savings is administrative savings. This is a savings associated with employers being able to – instead of paying three days after an employee is terminated, they can have the opportunity to pay on the next regular pay cycle.

Going off the pay cycle costs a significant amount of money to generate a paycheck. It's estimated by the Canadian Payroll Association at \$91 per cheque. That's why there's a belief that this will save employers a hundred million dollars. That hundred million dollars is extremely important, and it's important because these are funds that employers can use to continue to operate through these difficult times and have cash to be able to continue to keep Albertans employed and then hire Albertans. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, this is, you know, what we call a win-win. It takes no money from employees, who need the termination benefits, while at the same time saving monies for employers and then helping create jobs. I wanted to set the record straight on that particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to talk to an item raised by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, who talked about changes that we're making in Bill 32 regarding youth employment and suggesting that this is challenging and is something that we should not be moving forward with. This change that we are making, quite frankly, is minor.

5:40

Under the previous government, with Bill 17 the NDP set up a regime where they would provide in regulation youth employment, and they did so, Mr. Speaker. It includes delivery persons for newspapers, working in retail stores, clerks in retail stores, clerks or messengers in an office, and all of this could be done without a permit. In addition, the previous government also provided permits for those in the restaurant industry working a series of jobs – these are 13- and 14-year-olds – with restrictions. We have simply taken the provisions of that permit and put it into the regulation. Well over 200 permits were granted in 2018 by the members opposite in that government, and we've done so as well in 2019. This is a standard approach. Again, our approach here is trying to reduce the red tape, make it easier to get people back to work because that's really what this bill is all about.

This sort of leads into my third topic, which is all about balance. The members opposite have suggested that this bill takes labour laws and doesn't restore balance but brings it out of whack; it actually tips the balance to employers. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, Bill 17, the bill that was introduced and I mentioned before, makes our bill svelte by comparison, significantly more pages associated

with Bill 17. It pushed Alberta labour laws out of balance. It drove up costs, increased red tape, and was part of the reason for driving investment out of this province and reducing jobs, and we are addressing that.

I'd like to point out that in terms of balance, there were certain measures that were put in Bill 17. There were a number of leaves that the previous government put in Bill 17, and we left that there. That was good policy, but so, too, is Bill 32. It is good policy in terms of addressing some of the more egregious red tape, administrative costs, and burdens that stop Albertans from finding jobs and stop employers from creating jobs.

In regard to labour relations, Mr. Speaker, we did similar things. In Bill 17 they introduced a number of changes for their union friends and allies, including first contract arbitration, remedial certification, reverse onus. We left all those items in there. The members opposite would suggest that this is an attack on unions. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Thank you.

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

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 32, Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, 2020, and of course, the referral amendment that is before us to send this bill to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I know that I would agree with all of my colleagues in the opposition that that is the right decision, and I think it's become quite clear through this debate that – you know, while I appreciate the minister standing up just a moment ago, overall the fact is that we have not gotten the answers that we need. We have many questions about this legislation that have gone unanswered, and the fact is that, just like in many other pieces of legislation across the board, whether it was Bill 29, which was passed yesterday, whether it was past labour changes that were moved forward, this government has a very poor policy of not consulting on these important matters. While I appreciate that the members might say that they consulted, the fact is that the results that they got are not reflected in this legislation, which is my biggest concern and a concern for many of my colleagues.

Just for a moment – and I may touch on it further in my debate – the Minister of Labour and Immigration just stood, rose to speak about how it's returning balance to the workplace, specifically on the issue of having to pay your workers in a timely manner after they no longer work there. The problem for me, Mr. Speaker, is that to say, "Oh, it was costing too much to pay workers in a fair or a timely manner" is very concerning for me because specifically right now, in the middle of a pandemic, something that is going to go on for the foreseeable future, these workers are being told that they're being laid off, and this minister is saying that it's okay that they have to wait a month to receive their funding when that wasn't the case before.

That's very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, that while they're being laid off and, in some situations, they need to go find another job in most cases, this minister thinks it's okay for that employee to wait in certain instances up to 31 days or until the next pay period. The fact is that whether it costs employers a little bit more, these workers and these Albertans need money now, not a month from now. They need it right now.

I appreciate many of the comments that my colleagues in the NDP opposition have raised. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised some important points about the idea of crunch time, as he brought up, in the video game industry. It's something that I've followed a lot myself, you know, as a fan of video games: the creation of video

games and overall the economic prosperity that they could potentially bring if done right and if we treat the workers and protect them as they should be. But the fact is that the 100-hour work weeks, as the member mentioned, are quite normal in instances where games are being developed or patching of games is happening. It's not only the video game industry, of course.

I think back to my own experience working in the construction industry, first as a general labourer and then as an apprentice electrician, and that idea of crunch time happened at, well, specifically, one of my work sites, which eventually had to close because they weren't doing exactly what they should be. The fact is that these things are happening. The problem is that, once again, there was not a gun held to my head and me being told, you know, "Do this, or" – well, I suppose there was in the fact that I would lose my job. That was another point that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar raised. I don't have a lot of recourse to bring forward my concerns when they're telling me: "Today is going to be a 14-hour day. Today's going to be a 16-hour day, and you can have tomorrow off. You're not going to get paid overtime. This project needs to get out by the end of today. You're going to work overtime, but we're not going to pay you for it because tomorrow you'll take the day off, forcibly."

The same thing goes for changes to holiday pay, which we've seen from this government, and the idea of giving employers more opportunities to not fully pay or change the arrangements. That happened to me several times, Mr. Speaker, working in the construction industry, where I would be scheduled specifically for certain weeks because a stat holiday was coming up or a holiday was coming up, so that employer did not have to pay me or pay me the full amount for that day off.

It's very concerning, once again, that this minister paints a picture that, you know, under the NDP government workers were running free, and they were taking advantage of their employers, which is simply not the case. As many members on this side of the House have raised, we overall levelled the playing field to be more in line with other provinces. Alberta has a sore history of falling behind on legislation that protects the health and safety and the ability of the labour movement to be a part of the economy as well. We have a history of attacking that under many years of Conservatives, and we made some changes to that to further protect those workers. Unfortunately, once again we see another piece of legislation from this government going in the opposite direction.

Now, maybe not entirely specific to this legislation, but the idea of, you know, making it more commonplace that more hours can be worked and fair compensation isn't necessarily going to be there. I think back to an instance, and in this instance it was an unpaid internship that was happening. Shortly after finishing radio and television broadcasting at NAIT, I had an unpaid internship. Overall, I was treated just like any other worker, but that is not the same case for many workers that go on to do unpaid internships.

I think about one case specifically in November 2011 I believe is what the article says here. A fellow that I actually went to school with – I believe he was a few years ahead of me. His name was Andy Ferguson, and he had worked a 16-hour shift. Once again, this is an unpaid internship. On his drive home, from what the family says, they believe he fell asleep at the wheel because of the lack of rest in between the shift, and 16 hours in a single 24-hour period is a lot of time to be working. On his drive home he fell asleep at the wheel, as far as the family knows, from this article that I have before me. There was a collision, and that person passed away.

5:50

So while we talk about increasing opportunities to put people to work and we talk about scaling back the rights of workers, we have

to consider whether or not it's commonplace that situations like this happen. Every time we give employers an inch, we have to ensure that we are also protecting employees the same, and I would argue that this legislation is not restoring that balance, is not finding the right balance.

I think back, being an MLA over the last four years, in my first term several lobbyists reached out to my office. In a lot of instances I'd prefer to talk to the business owner that these lobbyists are trying to lobby for, but there were certain instances where I had conversations with organizations like Restaurants Canada, like, whoever else it might be, CFIB or CTF. When I sit down with these organizations, I listen to their concerns, and I recognize that they are there to bargain or lobby on behalf of employers, but I also recognize the fact that there is another part of the conversation. It doesn't seem that this minister has quite found that there's also an important side of the conversation from employees. It seems that this minister is only concerned about how employers are feeling about legislative changes.

Through the discussions of Bill 32 you can see online that many, you know, employer lawyers and lobbyists are very excited about the prospect of this passing because there are great opportunities for them to financially gain on the backs of workers.

Through many of these changes, whether it's the changes to employment standards or labour relations, the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act – I mean, it's touching on six pieces of legislation. I would say that, in that case, I would call this an omnibus piece of legislation that has not had the proper amount of time for consultation, and it should, once again, be referred to the standing committee on economic futures because this is, simply put, not ready to move forward.

This is a blatant attack on working people in our province at a time when those workers are simply trying to put food on their families' tables. You know, in the middle of a pandemic, when these workers are concerned about their job prospects tomorrow, in a week from now, in a month from now, this minister is saying: well, you better listen to your employer, then, because there's a good chance that if you decide to refuse work for whatever reason – concerns about being fairly compensated, concerns about being forced into an agreement where traditionally you would have received overtime, but all of a sudden it's crunch time, and you're no longer going to be given that overtime – you better take that agreement or you will be fired, and the government will do nothing to stand up for you.

Once again, as we look further into this government making it easier for 13- and 14-year-olds to work without needing a permit, my question, which has not been answered, is: what is this minister going to do to ensure that workplaces are going to continue to be safe places for these 13- and 14-year-olds? If you're opening up new industries for these young workers to work in, what protections are you putting in place? What enhanced standards on these work sites are you putting in place? Are you employing more occupational health and safety workers to go and ensure that these are safe workplaces for these workers? That has not been answered, and that's very concerning. You know, when we made changes to occupational health and safety codes in the past, we ensured that there were workers in that department to ensure that those law changes were being carried forth by employers. Unfortunately, I don't have a lot of faith in this minister that there are going to be new positions created to ensure that that is happening across the board.

Once again, this piece of legislation is not ready to be put into law. It's very unfortunate that this government is pushing through, just like they pushed through yesterday with Bill 29 and changes to municipal elections at the same time as people across the board

were saying: slow down; you are not listening to the consultations that you undertook. Once again we see that picture here with Bill 32, which is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I have made it no secret that I am a member of IBEW 424, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I am proud of that because I believe in the union movement. I am very concerned, first of all, that there were actually members of the government who were a part of the union movement before they became UCP MLAs who have, as far as I can tell, been silent on this issue and have turned their backs on the movement. That's very frustrating.

You know, we talk about unions and the democracy that's involved in them, the ability of workers to vote on how their money is being spent. That is happening before the legislation – this legislation is saying that people need to opt-in to the idea of spending money for advocating for things like pay and social equity. I've had a good amount of opportunity to work with AUPE on the idea of pay equity and social equity, which, once again, as the Member for Edmonton-Riverview stated, we are far behind on in Alberta, specifically one of the only provinces that doesn't have legislation around pay equity. That, if anything, is what we should be trying to take care of today. Instead, this UCP government and this minister are doing the opposite. They're trying to put more power in the hands of employers, trying to take more power away from unions, who are fighting for that equity across the board, which is very frustrating for me.

I can only imagine, with some of the other changes that are in here, that I'll have more opportunities to speak to this tonight, Mr. Speaker. I imagine that many pieces in this may also be challenged in court. Unfortunately, this government doesn't seem to care about strong-arming Albertans and forcing them to go to court. It's just another day in the chaos that has been created by the UCP.

With that being said, I would end my comments at this time, but I would ask that all of my colleagues support this referral amendment because it is very clear that this piece of legislation is not ready for the workplace. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the comments that he made. For a brief period of time I also had the honour of being a member of IBEW, and the handful of times that I went to the hall, I was impressed by the levels of transparency, particularly when it came to financial reporting. I believe every single time we gathered, there was a financial report at the beginning of the meeting about investments that had been made or expenditures that had been made in the couple of weeks since the past meeting. I am grateful for the fact that as a contributing member I was able to ask questions specifically and receive that information. I'm just wondering if the member can talk about his experiences as they relate to transparency, especially when it comes to financial reporting, something that the Premier has been discrediting in this House. I think a lot of what he's said doesn't reflect the realities of what I experienced in the short period of time that I was a member.

Also, I want to say that, growing up as the daughter of two teachers, both of my parents were members of the ATA. It wasn't something that we talked about a lot, but when we needed them, they were there. They had our backs, and that was particularly as it related to the significant wage rollbacks that were experienced during my childhood by both of my parents. That definitely had a significant impact on the way I see the world.

I know that my parents felt that they were backed into a situation where these were forced on them because they were told that if

people didn't take the rollbacks, junior members of the profession were going to be laid off, that by taking rollbacks they would prevent the young teachers – and everyone knew who they were. Everyone knew who these junior members of the staff were. They'd sit around the staff room, and they'd say, "You know, it's going to be really hard on our family if we both take 5 per cent rollbacks, but if it means we save somebody's job" – and they would look at the person – "well, then, I guess we should do that." But you know what happened? They were forced to take these rollbacks, and then they also laid off their colleagues

that they were trying to save the jobs of. So I'm hoping that if . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. However, seeing the time, it is 6 o'clock.

I know there is one special member of the public watching today, so happy third birthday to Eric Milliken. Daddy misses you. [applause]

The Assembly is now adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]



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