



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 23, 2020

Day 69

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Hon. Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
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Government Whip  
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Fir, Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
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Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
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Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Phillips  
Singh  
Turton

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

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Rosin  
Stephan  
Toor

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Dang  
Fir  
Goodridge  
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**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sabir  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
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Neudorf  
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Nixon, Jeremy  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

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Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Issik  
Jones  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Pancholi  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Yao

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Guthrie  
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Dach  
Feehan  
Fir  
Ganley  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 23, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

### Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, five years ago today the Legislative Assembly lost a dear friend and cherished colleague. Manmeet Bhullar served this Assembly and this province well. He, tragically, lost his life while attending to a motor vehicle accident on highway 2 on his way to the Legislature. Manmeet Bhullar died doing what he did best, and that was tending to the needs of others.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Bhullar, each as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. It's nice to Manmeet you.

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

### Ms Elhard:

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

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

### Members' Statements

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

#### Northern Railway Project Presidential Permit

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the honour, on choosing the first motion this spring, to urge the government to push forward with trade, transportation, energy corridors to obtain access to deep sea ports for our industries. These corridors would allow us to take our rightful place as the logistical hub in the North American market. To my surprise, although not to many of my colleagues who have been around for a while, the opposition voted against this motion to diversify and strengthen our provincial economy.

I spoke about one particular project that was starting to take shape as a real game changer, the Alberta to Alaska railroad. This project had promised to open up a route that would unlock economic potential for the entire northwest for generations to come. Did the

opposition see the potential in this? Nope, not even when it came across their desks years before I had gotten here.

Well, here we are, Mr. Speaker, in the fall. Even before the final design is complete on that project, the A2A project team has obtained a golden ticket, a presidential crossing permit. It's a big deal. It's the one key item that was holding up the Keystone XL project for years, as you may recall. The concern I have is that when we have great news like this that is taking place in our province, it's that crab bucket mentality of the socialists that starts to spread out like a sickening black mould to the rest of our population. The fact that they want to drag people into the depths of despair with their fear tactics or their can't-do-it attitude is simply quite appalling to me.

The fact is that we can get things done, we can work together, and we can get our market access that we so desperately need. We're going to keep moving forward and keep putting real points on the scoreboard for Albertans, building our future, not pulling them into despair. We will stay strong and free, Mr. Speaker, and we will not be weak and tamed.

### COVID-19 Response

**Ms Hoffman:** In the 10 days since the Premier last did anything related to COVID-19, 9,652 more Albertans have been infected and 78 more Albertans have died. Over 500 schools have reported cases over the last two weeks, and there are now alerts or outbreaks at more than half of them – 294 schools – as well as at 13 hospitals, 76 seniors' facilities, as well as businesses, daycares, prisons, and industrial facilities.

Dr. Hinshaw told us that we would be able to see the results of the Premier's attempts to slow the spread over this past weekend. What we see, Mr. Speaker, is accelerating infections with record-setting new case counts in each of the last four days. Yesterday Alberta had the most new cases of any province, including provinces with two or three times our population. Clearly, the Premier's plan has failed. COVID-19 is out of control in Alberta. How many more times must Dr. Hinshaw tell us that she doesn't make the decisions about Alberta's COVID response, that the Premier does?

Our hospitals are full. Our health care heroes are strained, many at the breaking point. Seniors' facilities are seeing harrowing losses. Our contact tracing system is overwhelmed because the Premier failed to prepare for the second wave. Small businesses don't know what each day will bring because the Premier won't share crucial modelling data. Albertans know this is an emergency. They are watching and worrying and waiting for this Premier to finally act or even just show his face.

Last week every single Premier addressed their province except for this Premier, and that is disgraceful. This Premier's failure to prepare, failure to act, and failure to even take this situation seriously is what has led Alberta to this point. It is our responsibility in this Legislature both to hold the Premier to account for his failures and to spur him into action before more lives are lost. I hope we do that today.

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

### Red Tape Reduction

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction tabled his first-ever annual report. The report shows significant progress made towards our goal of cutting red tape in Alberta by one-third. Currently Alberta's government is working on initiatives based on the feedback from over 6,800 submissions from Albertans. Combined with the expert

advice from the nine red tape reduction industry panels, Alberta's government is taking necessary actions to make Alberta the freest and fastest moving economy in North America.

Every minister is working within their ministry to address red tape and remove this serious inhibitor to economic development and growth. One minister in particular has addressed this in exceptional fashion by hitting the goal of one-third red tape reduction in the first year. The Minister of Indigenous Relations delivered just this by updating the government of Alberta's proponent guide for First Nations and Métis settlement consultation earlier this year, taking seriously our commitment to work more closely with our First Nations in a meaningful way.

We have already seen the significant possibilities through the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act and historic investments in such projects as the Cascade Power Project, made possible through the previously announced \$1 billion in loan guarantees through the AIOC. This kind of co-operation and the updated guide will help industry come to the table better prepared to address the concerns of indigenous communities and allow for further successes and mutually beneficial investments. In other words, it makes the consultation process more effective, informed, and respectful.

I am incredibly proud of the work the minister has accomplished along with his team at Indigenous Relations. He has done far more than cutting red tape; he has invested in relationships and true reconciliation and set an example for all of us to follow. All manner of political goals can be set for any number of reasons, but the promise to cut red tape, build better relationships, and get people back to work are amongst the most practical, effective, and meaningful. It is with great pleasure that I can add this to the list of another promise made, promise kept by our government.

### Health and Economy

**Member Irwin:** We must be obsessively focused on economic growth: those were the words of the Premier on November 2. The economy is important, of course, but a narrow obsession with the economy above all else will have and is having the opposite effect. What this Premier has forgotten is that an economy doesn't work without people; the economy is people. A healthy economy doesn't work without healthy people who can contribute to it. We cannot expect Alberta's economy to get better as COVID removes more people from it.

1:40

This government has found themselves choosing between the economy and people's health. That's a false dichotomy and a dangerous one, and as a result of this obsession, we're in an unbelievable mess. Our health care system has never been more stretched. Health care workers have never been more stressed. Teachers and educational workers are worried sick. Local businesses are suffering due to declining customers because, rightly so, sick or isolating people aren't shopping in the numbers that they were before.

Those on the front lines – mental health workers, social workers, those working in retail, in grocery, in child care – don't know how much more they can take. Let's be clear. All of this lies squarely at the feet of the UCP and their lack of leadership and communication, and it shouldn't have to be said, but people are dying.

I said early on in this pandemic that we'd be in a great place if we could look back and say: "You know what? We did too much, but we saved lives, so it was worth it." Sadly, we're at a place already where we'll be lucky if we can look back and say that anything was done, and this will be on the Premier. History will not

be kind to him. While it's clear that the moral argument means nothing to the UCP, it seems the economic argument means nothing either to a government that somehow couldn't account for \$1.6 billion last year and thought that giving away \$4.7 billion to wealthy corporations would magically trickle down.

Premier, you've lost the plot. It's time: time to come out of hiding, time to step up, time for a new obsession, one that values people over profits.

### Volunteer Initiatives in Central Peace-Notley

**Mr. Loewen:** Yesterday I had the pleasure of watching our local search-and-rescue teams take a course called ice rescue technician. Now, I'm not sure about you, but when I see our volunteer community members taking a weekend away from their work, hobbies, and family to jump into a frozen lake, I'm truly honoured to call them friends, relatives, and neighbours.

Similar to last summer, when search and rescue, including my wife, Teena, took swift water recovery, picture the scenario: just jump into these river rapids, and we'll pull you out. Hmm. And they volunteer for this.

I want to mention the Fairview Sport Horse Society. This group just sent out a notice for membership renewals. They raised the fee by \$10. Why? So they could give \$10 from every membership to a young couple that just had a micropreemie baby, one pound, eight ounces. Now, myself having twin grandsons born a little over two pounds, I have a bit of an idea of the time, energy, stress, and, yes, many tears that this young couple will go through. The Fairview Sport Horse Society knows this, too.

I also want to mention Scotty's Burger Shack in Crooked Creek. Now, Scotty is a retired boxer and a person who, if you meet him, you'll likely never forget. Scotty and his lovely wife, Robyn, have a son, Jordan, that's battled pediatric leukemia from the age of six. Scotty organized the Fight for Hope boxing fundraisers, raising tens of thousands of dollars each year. Now with his own burger shack he donates a dollar from every transaction to Kids with Cancer and Ronald McDonald House. Just in the last few days he passed the \$50,000 mark in donations. When I go in for a burger there, they know what I like: everything but garlic and onions, and it's an honest six inches thick.

I also want to mention the secret Santa for a senior program in Fairview that provides gifts for seniors in Fairview and surrounding communities to make sure seniors that might not have an opportunity to receive a gift get something special at Christmastime. I also look around to see the good work done by agriculture societies, rural crime organizations, food banks, and Santas Anonymous.

There are too many good organizations, charities, businesses, and people to mention. It is important to ask: why? Why do people jump into a frozen lake or raging rapids, give away profits, volunteer untold hours of personal time? The answer is simple: because they care.

Thank you.

### COVID-19 Response

**Member Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of the greatest public health threat in our lives. As we set new daily records for COVID-19 case counts, our hospitals are nearing capacity, and most of the cases have an unknown origin. Albertans are worried. They don't know what the next months or even days hold in store for them. We are now in the second wave of COVID-19, with no end in sight, and, worst of all, our Premier has been nowhere in sight either. He was missing for the past 10 days, and I've been hearing Calgarians ask the question: where is the Premier?

Premiers across the country have been available to the public, and they have been open and transparent with citizens about next steps, but here in Alberta we have no transparency on the decision-making processes of this government. While the Premier and his cabinet speak to their own party members over the weekend, Albertans have been left in the dark. This worries the Calgarians that I've been talking to.

The Premier already had a failed relaunch of the Calgary economy. At the eleventh hour he pulled the rug out from under Calgary businesses, and the latest set of restrictions were brought in with little notice. As a result, small businesses have incurred extra costs with no support from the UCP government. Now we have an out-of-control virus that's destroying lives and livelihoods while the Premier sits on the sidelines. For the sake of our province and for the people of Calgary we need leadership now more than ever.

Thank you.

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

### Police Funding

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It came as a disappointment to many of us in this House when the majority of Calgary city council voted for a motion to defund the police. They are playing politics, and it will have serious consequences for the safety of Calgarians.

What is even more disappointing is that the same members who voted in favour of this are now defending their vote when they were clearly wrong. I'll give a word of caution to those same councillors when this topic comes back to city council in the coming weeks. The movement they conceded to when voting, to defund the police, was called, quote, defund the police, unquote, not reallocate the police, not reform the police, not reimagine the police but defund the police.

Defund the police is a very strong statement. Mr. Speaker, that means defund school resource officers, defund diversity units, defund body-worn cameras, defund youth programs, and to defund the very organization that keeps us safe.

We know that so far in 2020 homicides are up 69 per cent from last year, aggravated assaults are up 23 per cent, and discharged firearms with intent are up a staggering 118 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the crime in Calgary is not going down. The brave men and women of CPS are the ones responding to these calls. If there is a reduction in funding to police service, that impacts the number of officers on the street keeping us safe.

I hope the members of Calgary city council who voted to defund the police will reconsider their position. Rather than defunding the police, let us, instead, all work together with solutions to keep our community safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Affordable Housing

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yesterday was National Housing Day. Every Albertan deserves a place to call home. In fact, housing is a human right. I'm grateful for all the affordable housing providers in the province who work to ensure that everyone has access to a home.

COVID-19 has shown the need for affordable housing. To properly self-isolate, people need somewhere to do so. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have pushed more people out of their homes, which creates instability in the housing market and, of course, in people's lives. This is why investing in affordable housing is essential in economic recovery.

Investments provide stability for people to participate in the economy, add vibrancy to communities, and create thousands of jobs. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce has called for increased investment. Arguments from a public health and a business lens prove that investing in affordable housing is a universal value.

Disturbingly, we have less affordable housing in Alberta compared to the other provinces, and the UCP have made it worse. Since taking office, the UCP have cut the rental supplement by 24 per cent. Albertans who rely on this have been given notice that their supports are ending and have reached out to the minister but heard nothing back. I have heard from several of these Albertans, and they are scared of becoming homeless.

The UCP have made existing affordable housing less usable by cutting housing maintenance by \$53 million. Yesterday the minister had the audacity to thank management bodies and providers, but those words are empty when the minister cuts funds and drives the narrative that their work is inefficient.

Rather than just listening to developers and donors, who have benefitted from a failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout, I hope the minister used National Housing Day as an opportunity to listen to housing providers and Albertans and realized that affordable housing needs to be supported significantly more than she is doing. Tragically, it is clear that . . .

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### COVID-19 Response

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, 73: that's how many Albertans have died from COVID-19 in the 10 days since the Premier last addressed Albertans about the crisis. That's 73 families who have suffered unimaginable loss, yet the Premier is not to be heard, not even to share his condolences. In the meantime our cases have exploded, our health system is on the brink, and our economy is in jeopardy. This Premier is presiding over the worst health crisis in the history of our province, yet our chief medical officer has been reporting on her own. To the Premier: why haven't we heard from him?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this is how disingenuous the NDP continue to be throughout the pandemic. You know, I suppose they're asking the Premier to break self-isolation rules throughout the pandemic, to ignore the public health advice. They know that he's isolating. It's completely ridiculous. This shows how hypocritical the NDP continue to be throughout the pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Well, the Prime Minister addressed Canadians daily during his isolation.

Now, during this Premier's silence Albertans were left with this misguided claim that doing nothing is the only way to protect the economy, but here's the IMF: the effectiveness of lockdowns calls for reconsidering the narrative about a trade-off between saving lives and supporting the economy. The enduring lesson from this pandemic is that any lasting economic recovery will depend on resolving the health crisis first. Why won't this Premier admit that the only way to protect our economy is to control the virus and then start doing just that?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times in this room, we will continue to review our public health measures. We will continue to impose public health measures that are based

on the evidence, that are narrow, that are targeted, that are going to minimize business disruption. That's exactly what we're going to continue to do. We're going to continue to consult with Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the chief medical officer of health, who's been a valued adviser for this government. We'll continue to do that as we make our way through responding to the pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Well, more than 4,500 new cases in the last 72 hours. Instead of answering to Albertans, the Premier left our CMO alone to address Albertans with no answer for his absentee premiership other than, quote, everyone has very busy schedules. There are hundreds of thousands of Albertans who are worried about themselves and their loved ones. Premier, you owe it to them to lay out your plan. Will you agree to an emergency debate on our pandemic response this afternoon? Why or why not?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is, again, how the NDP continue to politicize the pandemic response, continue to politicize COVID. They know that the Premier is in self-isolation, and they know that after he's done isolation, of course, he's going to be able to return to participate in the press conferences that are held with Dr. Deena Hinshaw. That's exactly what's going to happen. We're going to continue to make sure that our first priority in this government is our response to the pandemic, and the lives and livelihoods of Albertans will be top of mind for this government going forward.

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

**Ms Notley:** Apparently, this Premier is the only politician that can't continue to communicate with the people who elected him while in isolation.

### Mask Policies

**Ms Notley:** Now, quote, our current situation is grim. That's the CMO telling Albertans that our health care system simply can't handle the rate of increase we're seeing in other cases. Alberta is now the only province in the country without mandatory masks in public places and businesses. Why is this government the only one in Canada that refuses to protect the health and safety of all of its citizens?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. In fact, we've been one of the most pro-mask jurisdictions. We were one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to recognize the efficacy of masks, which is one of the reasons why we started distributing 40 million masks for free to Albertans through our many different partners throughout the province. We understand that masks are an important tool in protecting not just ourselves but also our loved ones, our community, and our health care workers, because, as we know, as community spread increases, so does increase in our hospitals and the outbreaks in our hospitals and in continuing care. That's why we continue to ensure that Albertans understand how important masks are as a tool to . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Yet when we asked last week for this minister to recommend that masks be mandatory, he sneered, and he read from a month-old column from the B.C. CMO. Here's Dr. Henry the very next day, quote: we need to relieve the stress on our health care systems or else people will suffer. Mr. Speaker, she said that while ordering that masks become mandatory all over her province on a

day that their case rate was less than half of ours. Is this Premier really going to keep waiting and keep putting more lives at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, look, as I said, we were one of the first jurisdictions to recognize how effective masks can be as a tool for responding to the pandemic. We continue to encourage Albertans to use masks in any situation where they cannot physically distance. The NDP are calling for us to duplicate efforts that many of our municipalities have already done through municipal bylaws, and we will continue to work with them. We'll continue to make sure that the lives and livelihoods of all Albertans are top of mind in our response to this pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** We are the only province without a provincial mask rule. Who are you guys afraid of? Right now there are dozens of communities with populations over 5,000 that are on AHS' hot list that do not have mandatory mask bylaws north to south, everywhere from Medicine Hat to Cold Lake. Smoky Lake county has the highest per capita case count in the province: no mask bylaws. Will the Premier today take action to make sure that every community on AHS' hot list – for heaven's sake, it's really simple – has mandatory masks in public spaces? Why not?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic we've made it clear that when there is an active case rate of 50 or more per 100,000 per capita, we will work with those local communities to find out where the transmission occurred. It's very important to look at the data where that transmission occurred in the community for us to be able to work with the municipal leaders and determine measures that are very specific to that community so that we can make sure that as we make decisions, it's an approach that's based on the evidence, that's based on the data instead of the broad measures that the NDP are advocating for.

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

**Ms Notley:** The only province in the country, Mr. Speaker.

### COVID-19 Response (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Now, this Premier sat on his hands for weeks, and today we have uncontrolled spread at a rate unseen in Canada, generating more new cases than Ontario despite having less than a third of their population. Albertans need to know the truth about what we're facing so that they can protect themselves and others. The Premier claims he doesn't have updated modelling, but he has projections for case numbers for hospital capacity, for ICU availability, all at his fingertips. Why will this government not share that incredibly important information with the Albertans who they are asking to do all the heavy lifting?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Look, the modelling that we released in the spring tells us what we already know. We've known throughout the fall as well that as we have increased spread throughout the community, as people have fatigue in responding to COVID, then, yes, we are going to have case numbers rise throughout the province. That does mean that there will be increases in hospitalizations. It does mean that we will have increases in those who need care in our ICUs. We ask all Albertans to continue to fight against the fatigue, to continue to follow the public health guidance,



to continue to take measures not just to protect themselves but also to protect their loved ones and our health care workers.

**Ms Notley:** In return for that ask, they have the right to know, Minister.

Now, our contact tracing system has collapsed. We don't know the source of more than 88 per cent of new cases, and we don't have enough contact tracers to reach out to the new ones. To put it bluntly, we don't know where the virus is coming from, and we don't know where it's going. Everyone except the Member for Banff-Kananaskis knew back in summer that a second wave was coming. Why did this Premier wait until the middle of the second wave before he started hiring more contact tracers? Why didn't he start this work back in the summer?

**Mr. Shandro:** Very easy question to answer, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, we didn't start that late. We started back in March. We started with 50 contact tracers throughout the province pre-COVID. We are now at, I think, over a hundred. We are continuing to hire another 425. We'll continue to make sure that AHS has all the resources it has to be able to continue to hire more and more contact tracers. It's incredibly unfortunate that the member keeps on cheering against our response to the pandemic, keeps on cheering against Alberta, trying to undermine the credibility of our contact tracers. It has not imploded. We are going to continue to support those contact tracers.

**Ms Notley:** I'm cheering for Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the Premier promised to build a wall around seniors. Here's what really happened. The majority of new funding went to unaccountable private operators, and the majority of care aides didn't actually get wage top-ups. Many health care aides lost hours of employment, more don't have sick time, and now we've lifted the multisite rule at the facilities where people are at the greatest risk. Will you do now what you should have done eight months ago and establish a comprehensive continuing care workforce strategy to protect Alberta's most vulnerable citizens?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. That strategy was developed, and it was developed starting with the operators. The continuing care system: 80 per cent of the beds are through those independent providers, both nonprofits, faith-based groups, and private partners; 20 per cent is through AHS, as the hon. member knows. It's important that we continue to work with those operators. They started the conversation with us on what they needed to protect their residents and their staff. We've provided them with 170 million additional dollars for them to be able to respond to the pandemic. We're going to continue to work with them. It's unfortunate that the NDP continue to attack the independent providers in the health system.

**Ms Notley:** What we are doing is standing up for those desperate front-line workers who need more support, not less.

## 2:00 Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

**Ms Notley:** Now, this Premier wasted three months lecturing Albertans when the ones who actually needed to take this more seriously are sitting right behind him. This weekend the Member for Banff-Kananaskis sent a message to Albertans saying: "The worst of the COVID-19... pandemic [is] behind us... Our province has been one of the most successful in limiting the spread." This kind of misinformation is dangerous and

irresponsible. To the Premier: will he tell the member to apologize and tell that member to stop telling Albertans things that aren't true?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the NDP are so desperate to start quoting newsletters that were written in September, when, of course, all Albertans had COVID fatigue and many people were forgetting that we were going to have an increase in cases in the fall. Not government. We are continuing to make sure and we did continue since back in January to make sure that AHS had the resources that they need to be able to respond to all future waves of COVID, including the second wave. We're going to continue to work with AHS, continue to work with our public health officials, and we'll continue to make sure they have all the resources they need to respond to the pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Members of this UCP caucus speak for government, and Albertans still listen to them.

But there's more. The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland told Albertans that wearing a mask to protect yourself against COVID-19 is, quote, virtue signalling. He then actually suggested that Albertans living in Edmonton and Calgary wearing masks are the ones driving the spread. Those kinds of comments are not only ridiculous; they put people at risk. Premier, will you tell this member to apologize and also tell him to stop telling Albertans things that are not true and put them at risk?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this is again an example of how disingenuous the NDP continue to be throughout the pandemic. I look forward to Edmonton-Strathcona telling her caucus members not to be attending superspreader events in Red Deer, like the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has done recently, and for the NDP to stop being hypocrites, stop politicizing the pandemic, stop politicizing. If we want to talk about what's unfortunate and, quite frankly, despicable – the NDP continuing to undermine the credibility of our public health officials, to undermine the credibility of our public health response: it's unfortunate. I call on them to stop it.

**Ms Notley:** It's political when members of that caucus tell Albertans not to wear masks and that danger is behind us.

About our children now, the Member for Central Peace-Notley said, "Kids sanitizing hands 14 times or more a day during school hours is unacceptable." The Member for Red Deer-South said, "Not a single school-aged child has died from COVID in Alberta... [This] is excessive risk aversion." Mr. Speaker, we have 300 outbreaks in schools, and these members are saying that preventing outbreaks among children is excessive risk aversion. Premier, will you ask these members to apologize and stop telling Albertans things that aren't true?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you who I will ask to apologize, and it's that member for continuing to undermine the credibility of our public health folks, the advice that we're getting from our public health folks, undermining the credibility of the tools that we're using to respond to the pandemic. It's unfortunate that they continue to cheer against Alberta, continue to cheer against the response to the pandemic. It's unfortunate. In fact, it's appalling. I call on the NDP to cut it out.

## Rural Internet and Cellphone Service

**Mr. Loewen:** Yesterday I was watching volunteers training at a very popular local lake. This lake is surrounded by agriculture residences and isn't more than five kilometres from highway 43, a major artery for the Peace Country and beyond. When I tried to

make an Instagram post, I realized there was no service. Sadly, this lack of service isn't unusual in rural Alberta. In fact, last year, when I travelled through my riding of Central Peace-Notley along with the Minister of Service Alberta, that was a common complaint of constituents, that they were left out in the cold on connectivity with cellphone and Internet. To the minister: can you provide an update on the work you're doing with rural connectivity that I can share with my constituents?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's good to be back here this week, Mr. Speaker. I notice that your facial hair has grown a little bit more over the last week. It's grown in pretty well.

Mr. Speaker, in response to that question, making sure that all Albertans have access to connectivity, rural broadband is key to our recovery plan. We're working closely with the Minister of Service Alberta to make sure we implement that plan across our province because it's important to make sure everybody – from social interactions to education to the economy – has connectivity and access to rural broadband.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that connectivity isn't all about Instagram posts but is more about safety, jobs, and economic opportunity, having services into parts of Alberta where oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture take place, services that others take for granted, and given that last year the federal government promised \$1 billion to help with rural connectivity issues and that that money has not yet been delivered and that earlier this month the federal government reannounced that funding with an additional \$750 million top-up, to the minister: what conversations are you having with the federal government to tap into these monies to improve rural connectivity?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. He's hit on a really good point there with the fact that connectivity is so important for agriculture, is so important for everything that we do here in this province. We are continuing to work with the federal government, we are continuing to work with municipal leaders, telcos as well as our indigenous communities to make sure we can improve connectivity across this province, including with rural broadband. Lots of work ahead on this. It's an important part of our recovery plan, and the Minister of Service Alberta is doing an amazing job on this file.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture make up a large part of the Alberta economy and given that the previous government could always talk a good game but never deliver for rural Alberta and a province-wide strategy can help countless Albertans and partnerships with industry provide actual solutions to the issues facing rural Albertans with connectivity, to the minister: what discussions have you had with partners throughout the telecom industry to create a strategy to establish rural connectivity in rural Alberta communities?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The Minister of Service Alberta has met with telcos, and he's met with Telsat, the Canadian Fibre Optics Group. Just this last week I had the opportunity to join him on a call with SpaceX, and

their Starlink program is actually already starting to cover vast areas of the province of Alberta. They're planning on covering all of Alberta by the end of 2021. So there's a whole bunch of new technologies that are coming on. I was actually blown away by the speed with which this technology is available. You can plug in your satellite dish and be online within three minutes. It's encouraging technology that's coming on. We're exploring this further for some due diligence. Lots of exciting announcements to come.

### COVID-19 Outbreaks in Seniors' Care Facilities

**Ms Sigurdson:** In May the Premier promised to build a wall around seniors so they would be protected. Sadly, any attempt to build such a wall has crumbled, and seniors' safety is in shambles. Two-thirds of COVID-19 deaths have happened in continuing care. The Edmonton General has now reported 33 deaths and 174 cases. Alberta is recording more new daily cases than Ontario and Quebec, and they have had an extremely deadly first wave. To the Minister of Health: where are you, what have you been doing to protect seniors, and what will you actually do to stop the spread?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to answer that question. We provided \$170 million in additional funding to our continuing care operators. We continue to work with AHS, who are also working with those operators to be able to respond very quickly when there is an outbreak in any of those facilities. We continue to work with the operators so that they have all the tools available to them to be able to protect their staff and to protect their residents. We'll continue to do that. We're going to listen to the operators, and we're going to listen to AHS and continue to make sure that they have all the resources available to them to be able to take care of both the staff and the residents.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the minister claims that the single-site staffing order, which is intended to ensure staff do not work in multiple centres, has been effective in controlling the spread and given that I would agree with him if it were being actually used but that instead the long exception list makes this order ineffective and given that in one site, South Terrace, all but four residents have COVID-19 – it's devastating – to the minister. Cut the excuses and tell Albertans what you will do right now. There is clearly a shortage of staff. Will you hire more?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the member is referring to an order of the chief medical officer of health. So if there are exceptions to her order, it's from operators working with her and her office to be able to justify to her when and if an exception should be made. I leave that to our public health officials, to be able to make those decisions. It's unfortunate that the NDP continue to undermine the credibility of the chief medical officer of health. Yes, I'm very happy to work with our operators to be able to continue to hire throughout their facilities, to make sure they have enough resources to respond to the pandemic.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that every single one of the nine continuing care sites that have an exception now has an outbreak and given that the Premier and the Health minister decided to take the last week off governing and did nothing to address the crisis in long-term care but allowed UCP members to run rampant with spreading misinformation, to the minister: are you really going to stand in this

House and tell the terrified families of continuing care residents that you've done all you can?

2:10

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. member said was a complete and total falsehood. I've been here every day when there's been question period. I'm here in Edmonton. We continue to govern. We continue to govern by working with AHS. We continue to govern by working with our continuing care operators and those who provide DSL, designated supportive living, to all the residents that need it throughout the province, and we'll continue to do that. It's unfortunate that the NDP continue to undermine the credibility of Dr. Hinshaw, undermine the credibility of those who are in her office, undermine the credibility of all the MOHs throughout the system.

**Ms Sigurdson:** You do it all by yourself.

**The Speaker:** Order.

#### Health Minister's Information on COVID-19

**Mr. Shepherd:** *South Peace News* reports today that the Health minister joined a UCP virtual AGM on Saturday. A UCP member asked him if he is consulting with Dr. Roger Hodkinson, a conspiracy theorist, who says that masks are useless, social distancing is useless, and COVID-19 is "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting public." Multiple attendees of the AGM report that the minister said that he knows Hodkinson well and values his judgment. Is it true that the minister is consulting with Roger Hodkinson, and does he actually value his ridiculous and dangerous theories?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of lies that have been told about me on social media. That's one of the craziest that I've heard. It's no surprise to see the NDP continuing, falling over themselves to try and perpetuate those types of untruths, so I'm not surprised hearing the hon. member saying that. But no. I have met with Mr. Hodkinson; I did before the pandemic. He was a past president of the Society of Laboratory Physicians. I have respect for his credentials, but I disagree with him when it comes to COVID and what he said to Edmonton city council. To make that very clear, the only adviser that we have is Dr. Deena Hinshaw.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, to clarify, given that one attendee, Cheryl Kerr Fitchie, said that the minister "spoke very candidly about how he has not been willing to take advice from the Feds or Health Canada or the World Health Organization on COVID protocol for Alberta. He said he has been referred to Dr. Hodkinson many times and has the utmost respect for his expertise in this field," and given that Hodkinson said that the COVID response is "utterly unfounded public hysteria," to be clear, to the minister: is Ms Fitchie lying, or are you actually ignoring the real medical experts and instead promoting dangerous misinformation from Roger Hodkinson?

**Mr. Shandro:** Asked and answered, Mr. Speaker. I already answered that question. The only adviser that we have when it comes to responding to the pandemic is Dr. Hinshaw. That's who we're going to continue to listen to as we respond to the pandemic. I understand that the hon. member loves to find weird, strange conspiracy theories on the Internet to be able to tell about me and

about our government. No, it's fortunately untrue. We are listening to Dr. Deena Hinshaw, and that's who we're going to listen to as we're responding to the pandemic.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these strange conspiracy theories are coming from this minister's fellow caucus members and given that Hodkinson says, "There is absolutely nothing that can be done to contain this virus, other than protecting more vulnerable people. It should be thought of as nothing more than a bad flu season," recalling the Premier's remarks calling this an influenza, and given that that's completely false and completely contradictory to the advice of Dr. Hinshaw, will this minister apologize for all the confusion he has caused, that his members have caused, and finally commit to taking real steps, like a mask mandate for all of Alberta, and disavow anyone spreading this kind of misinformation?

**Mr. Shandro:** To be clear, Mr. Speaker, what I'm being asked to do is to apologize for the confusion created by the hon. member for perpetuating strange social media conspiracy theories that he's finding on the Internet. No, I'm not going to apologize for the hon. member doing that. He's continuing to do that. It's unfortunate that he continues to do that throughout the pandemic. We're going to be focused on the pandemic, we're going to be focused on the lives and livelihoods of Albertans, and we're going to be focused on listening to Dr. Deena Hinshaw and making sure that AHS has all the resources it needs to respond to the pandemic.

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

#### Peter Lougheed Centre Expansion

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of a strong and resilient health care system that, one, above all, has the capacity to care for Albertans in need no matter how dire the situation becomes. That is why I am very excited to see the expansion project of the Peter Lougheed Centre moving forward, an essential facility located in the heart of northeast Calgary. To the Minister of Health: how will this project increase and enhance the quality and capacity of our health care system?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Investing in health facilities is part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening Alberta's publicly funded health system. The emergency department at the PLC in Calgary will be expanded by 15 beds and will include two new trauma areas. Now, lab services and mental health treatment capacity will also be increased, and note that demand for lab services at the hospital is growing. It's a busy hospital. About 2.3 million tests will be completed by 2030. That would be up by more than one-third from the current levels.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Peter Lougheed Centre serves as a primary hospital for tens of thousands of northeast Calgary residents and is an important medical hub for the entire city as well as many people in southern Alberta and given that normally at this time of year our hospitals are at 103 to 104 per cent capacity, Minister, can you inform the House about the details of these upgrades and how they will support the province's responses to medical emergencies?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This \$137 million project will create hundreds of jobs. It will increase as well Alberta's health care system capacity. We expect phase 1 will be completed in the spring of '22. The phased approach will ensure that patients have full access to existing services at the Peter Lougheed Centre throughout construction. This project will help the PLC provide top-quality emergency, mental health, and lab services to people in Calgary and southern Alberta for years to come.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that tens of thousands of Albertans are out of work and our province is facing a job crisis and major economic downturn and given that a lot of the important infrastructure is aging and in need of repairs or upgrades, to the minister: how will this project create jobs and support economic growth while also improving infrastructure that is vital to our health care system?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Construction at the Peter Lougheed Centre will create almost 770 construction jobs in Calgary. We're making needed improvements to our hospitals, drug treatment centres, and long-term care homes for seniors. The PLC project is part of our \$10 billion infrastructure spending commitment as part of Alberta's recovery plan. Improving our publicly funded health care system is essential so that Albertans can get the care that they need when they need it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, the Official Opposition House Leader.

#### **Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addiction's Remarks**

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The associate minister of health went into a virtual town hall Friday night and made remarks that caused more fear and anxiety for Albertans currently living through the greatest public health threat they've ever faced. At one point he claimed that the government criteria for considering any new COVID response would be for hospitals and ICUs to be pushed to the limit. By Sunday he said that we should disregard his comments because, and I quote, I'm not a spokesperson or involved in any decision-making around introducing new restrictions or hospital capacities. End quote. To the minister: you don't speak for the government and aren't involved in decision-making, so why exactly are you in cabinet?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The associate minister has already corrected his statement on the matter. Yes, hospital capacity is a critical consideration in any response to the pandemic. Recall that when the world first started talking about flattening the curve in the spring, the goal was to ensure that our hospitals were not overwhelmed. Now the government, based on the expert advice of public health officials such as Dr. Hinshaw, is making evidence-based decisions to avoid getting to that point, a goal that I think we all support.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister was asked about the circuit breaker concept and said, again, I quote, it is a question being examined back and forth on a daily basis; I wouldn't jump the gun to say when we'll do that, but I can assure you it was a suggestion that has been debated back and forth and discussed thoroughly, end quote, and given that it certainly sounds like the minister is in the room for the debate, was he just pretending to be a big shot for his constituents or was he thrown under the bus for revealing cabinet secrets?

**Mr. Shandro:** I'm happy to talk about government policy. Maybe there's a future question about government policy, Mr. Speaker, but let me talk about our response to the pandemic. We've continued to listen to the expert advice of Dr. Deena Hinshaw. We'll continue to do so. We'll continue to work with AHS. We'll continue to make sure that they and our continuing care operators have all the resources that they need. Perhaps in the next question we'll get a question about government policy.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I was talking about the circuit breaker concept and what the associate minister said and given that the Member for Banff-Kananaskis was caught spreading false COVID-19 information last week and given that the Minister of Health left UCP members in Peace River with the impression that he was endorsing a conspiracy theorist who says that COVID-19 is a hoax and given the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland once told his constituents that masks caused COVID, does the associate minister understand how dangerous it is for him as a cabinet member to spread misinformation during a public health crisis that has killed hundreds of Albertans?

2:20

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to hear Edmonton-Manning being concerned about campaigns of disinformation. The campaigns of disinformation throughout the pandemic coming from the NDP have been deplorable. It's been disgusting. It's been appalling to continue to see them be so desperate to quote a newsletter that was written in September, for them to continue to perpetuate these myths and these rumours that are perpetuated and created on social media. It's disgusting. I call on the NDP to cut it out and stop undermining the credibility of the tools that are being used and the responses being done to respond to the pandemic.

#### **COVID-19 and Correctional Facilities**

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, I have lost count of how many times I have asked in this Chamber the Justice minister about his action to protect the lives of those living and working in Alberta's correctional facilities, and I have yet to get an honest answer. Outbreaks are rampant, and officers are being told that they must continue to come back to work even if they have COVID-19. To the minister: isn't it dangerous to force these people to work while sick with a deadly virus? Will you put an end to this now and today?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. We're going to continue to work with the health personnel to make sure that we have the right protocols in place in our correctional centres across this province. At the

beginning of the health crisis we put in place, you know, isolation protocols as people were brought in. We created cohorts as they were brought into our correctional centres. We're going to continue to listen to the health professionals to make sure we do everything possible to create safe work environments and to keep people that are there healthy as well.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that there are outbreaks at Calgary Correctional Centre, Edmonton Institution for Women, Edmonton Remand Centre, Drumheller Institution, and Calgary Remand Centre and given that, to add insult to illness, this government is planning to cut pay for correctional officers, to the minister: explain why you are taking this cruel step while these officers are working in extreme and dangerous circumstances. You really have no compassion.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, let me thank our correctional officers for the amazing work that they do every single day, keeping work environments safe for the jobs that they do. We're going to continue in this environment, in this pandemic to do everything possible to create safe work environments. We're going to continue to work with the Health department to make sure we have the best possible protocols in place. We've done that from the beginning of the pandemic to now. We're not going to ignore the health orders. We're going to listen to the science, we're going to listen to the health professionals, make sure we have that safe work environment for Albertans, make sure we have a safe work environment in our correctional centres.

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has also refused hazard pay for correctional staff during the pandemic and given that they are directly in the line of fire of COVID-19 and some even have COVID-19 but are being told to come into work every day and given that the minister's gross mishandling of this matter will no doubt get more people sick, to the minister: perhaps if you won't manage the safety of the front-line workers, will someone else in the cabinet do it for you?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, that question is absolutely ridiculous. If somebody has COVID, they're going to isolate at home. The notion that the member on the opposite side thinks that for somebody that has COVID, we're asking them to come into work, is ludicrous. If somebody has COVID, they're isolating at home. We're going to continue to follow the advice of the health officials, have the best possible protocols. We respect the correctional officers and the work that they do to keep those correctional facilities safe every single day. Let's take the politics out of this.

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

#### Bill 47

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now more than ever we see the importance of keeping Alberta competitive, and reducing red tape is critical to our economy as we continue to navigate this COVID-19 pandemic. Workplace safety laws need to be easier to understand, and a more sustainable workers' compensation system needs to be put in place to support Albertans now and into the future. To the Minister of Labour and Immigration: on the occupational health and safety side why were changes needed when it comes to health and safety committees, and how will they make workplaces safer for Albertans?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We're making changes to occupational health and safety laws to make workplaces safer, reduce red tape so that we can reduce costs and get Albertans back to work. The previous government had made changes to the laws, making them incredibly prescriptive, difficult to understand. We are taking that prescription, and we are moving that into the code, where it belongs. Then we're allowing our health and safety professionals to focus on outcomes, not box-checking. We are focused on improving health and safety outcomes and getting Albertans back to work.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Given that there has been much fear and smear by the members opposite on Bill 47 and given that their critics have insisted a worker's right to refuse dangerous work has been compromised with Bill 47, to the Minister of Labour and Immigration: can you please clarify what changes were made in regard to the right to refuse dangerous work, and how do these changes compare to other jurisdictions in Canada?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the hon. member for the question. The right to refuse remains. This is a core component of our health and safety act, and we are maintaining that. What we're doing is streamlining the process and making it easier to understand. We urge employees and employers to work together to identify risks at the workplace and address those before there's a need for right to refuse, but if those items aren't addressed, the right to refuse remains and we urge employees to use it when there is a risk that is an undue hazard.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a review panel was assembled by the previous government to make recommendations on how to proceed with the labour law changes and given that the previous government made its own changes to our provincial labour laws and in the end were based more on an ideological approach, to the same minister: can you please advise us if the previous government followed the advice of the very experts they enlisted and highlight what consultation your ministry did to inform the changes made under Bill 47?

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

**Mr. Copping:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer our government engaged with workers, job creators, health and safety professionals to get input on changes to the occupational health and safety laws and workers' compensation system. We received more than 300 responses for OHS and more than 80 responses for workers' compensation. We also held a number of virtual town halls to discuss the issues with experts, and we published this on our what we heard report, which is on our website. We've listened, unlike the opposition, who, when they made changes, didn't listen to their panel on a number of cases and decided to go ideologically . . .

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

#### COVID-19 and Public Service Health and Safety

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 12 the Premier introduced new measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission, including a suggestion that employers reduce employees in the workplace using work-from-home arrangements. There are

currently thousands of government of Alberta employees who could be working from home but who aren't being allowed to. Why are government staff who can work from home still being told they have to come into the office during the second wave? When will this government lead by example and follow the advice they are giving all other Alberta employers?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the effort of all of our front-line workers and public-sector workers at this point in the history of the province. We take the health and safety of our employees very seriously, and we're working hard with senior leadership to ensure that safe, defensible protocols are followed to ensure the safety of our employees.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the government could do what it's recommending other employers do and allow workers who can work safely from home to do so and given that the government of Alberta is one of the largest employers in the province and given that Alberta is the only province without a provincial mask mandate and given that evidence is that masks reduce the transmission of COVID, Minister, you have staff all over Alberta. Why haven't you implemented mandatory masking? Your employees are scared for their lives, for their families' lives. Would you please take this rational and straightforward step now?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we take the health and safety of our employees very seriously, and we're implementing measures within the workplace to ensure the safety of our employees. Many employees continue to work from home. Again, we're taking measures to ensure the health and safety of the public sector.

**Ms Gray:** Given that if they can work from home, they should be allowed to, and right now I am hearing from hundreds of workers who are not, and given that the guidance from the chief medical officer of health requires isolation for 10 days or 14 days given your circumstances and given that a week ago we called for sick pay for Alberta workers who need it during this pandemic, to the minister: will you do the right thing, announce a sick pay program for Alberta's front-line heroes today? You'll likely answer talking about the Ottawa program; please don't. Albertans need more than you advertising for Ottawa and programs that are limited to a single two-week use.

2:30

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we take the health and safety of our employees very seriously. With respect to sick days the vast majority of our staff, certainly our medical staff through AHS, all full- and part-time staff, do not use vacation days or other leave for isolation; they use sick time. When that's used up, they're eligible for short-term disability, which is available immediately as AHS has waived the usual waiting period. Again, we're taking measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our public sector.

#### Wildland Firefighter Rappel Program

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, last year the UCP cut the wildland firefighter rappel program. These highly specialized firefighters

are, or were our first line of defence to fight forest fires. At the end of the day, they save property, and more importantly they save lives. A recent report by this government even proved this. It found that investing in initial attack support saves money in the long run and that the cost of fighting a fire was cut in half when crews arrive on time. Why is this UCP government cutting a program that works and actually saves money?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has discussed this in great detail both in this Chamber and outside the Chamber. We're proud in this province of our firefighters, who are able to respond significantly to large fire events. We're also happy that we did not have any large ones this year while we were facing COVID. I can tell you as an MLA of a forestry riding that we're very grateful for that. What I can also tell you is that you will see with this government proper forestry management practices, something you did not see with the NDP. That is the number one thing that we can do to be able to prevent forest fires inside this province.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister still claims that they will save money despite the latest report showing otherwise, notwithstanding the recent comments of the Government House Leader, and given that documents obtained through freedom of information this past spring show the minister and his office fudged the numbers on cost savings and given that the minister has claimed that there is an alternative in the human external cargo, or HEC, program and given that the minister already knew that HEC was deemed to be unsafe by Transport Canada and not allowed to be deployed, how can we trust anything this government says when it comes to protecting Albertans from forest fires and keeping firefighters safe?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you can certainly trust this government over the previous NDP government because we actually know what a forest is. We're proud to represent forestry ridings. We understand the value of being able to protect them from fire, to be able to make sure that we can have sustainable forestry activities as well as people to enjoy them. I can tell you that both the minister of agriculture and myself as the minister of environment will be doing something that the NDP should have done, which is challenging the federal government for their failure inside Jasper when it comes to the pine beetle. By far the biggest threat that we face for forest fire is right there, and that member and his government failed when it came to that.

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, given that there is no equally effective alternative to the rap program and given that the program has been proven time and again to save money and given that British Columbia has now recruited many of the excellent rap team members who were forced to leave our province to work there and given that these highly specialized firefighters have been essential in fighting some of the biggest fires in our province's history, will the minister admit that it was a mistake to let these firefighters go and reinstate this program before next fire season? Mistakes are admitted by mature governments.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the minister of agriculture went through a very vigorous process to be able to decide what the best avenues are for our forest fire fighting program inside this province. We're confident that we have an excellent program in place. Again, we're very excited because we can finally move forward with true modern forestry practices, something that

that hon. member and his former party resisted. In fact, they exposed us to a tremendous amount of risk as their inability to be able to deal with forestry management practices inside this province – and I want to be clear that we’re going to deal with the biggest issue, which is challenging the federal government to fix their pine beetle mess in Jasper.

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

#### Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in the House I proudly spoke about how small-business leaders have been leading the charge in local philanthropy and volunteerism, giving back to our communities in the face of uncertainty. Despite the financial hardships that these businesses have faced, they’ve continued to be there to support Albertans in any way that they can. There’s no doubt that it has been a tough year, and small-business owners need to know that we have their backs, now more than ever. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: what grants or financial supports are in place to assist Alberta small businesses who’ve been impacted by COVID-19?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. We thank our small-business owners for everything that they’ve done through this pandemic to stay open and be there in our communities.

We also want to announce today a new relaunch grant, Mr. Speaker, a second tranche of up to \$5,000 for small-business owners across Alberta. We’re also lowering the threshold down to 40 per cent, and that’s retroactive as well, going all the way back. So up to \$10,000 of support is now available for small-business owners across Alberta that are impacted by these new health orders.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that good news.

Given that small businesses provide good jobs in our hometowns and neighbourhoods and inject billions of dollars a year into our economy and given that in light of the recent COVID-19 spikes Alberta small businesses will be facing an even tougher road to economic recovery in the coming months and given that over half of Alberta small businesses have said that they’ve seen a further drop in sales as a result of the second wave of the pandemic, to the minister: can you provide us with an update on how small businesses are faring in Alberta and what measures are in place if sales continue to drop?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We’ve had 7,400 small businesses open or re-open. That’s 400 more than at the beginning of the pandemic. We’ve had \$350 million of Workers’ Compensation Board supports and premium deferrals, working that out with small businesses. As well, we’ve had 16,000 businesses take advantage of the first relaunch grant. But it’s really important that we’re there for people, with these new health orders that are coming out, so that’s why we’ve done this second tranche of the relaunch grant available to small businesses. That’s getting worked on right now. It will be available online here in the coming weeks.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Manitoba, the province with the highest number of COVID cases per capita, is in total lockdown, with restaurants, bars, gyms, and nonessential retail stores closed, many of those being small businesses, and given that COVID case numbers in our own province are dramatically rising and that only a small percentage of these cases can be linked back to Alberta small businesses like retail and restaurants, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: can you commit today that our government will continue to take an evidence-based approach rather than using blanket shutdowns when these businesses are in their busiest season?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to continue to work with the Minister of Health and Dr. Hinshaw to make sure that we follow the evidence, we follow the data to make sure that we’re as targeted as possible. It’s not about using a sledgehammer; it’s about being as targeted as possible.

We’re also right now in the fourth quarter. There’s light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of this pandemic we didn’t know how long this was going to last. These are some promising signs on vaccines and treatments that are out there, that’ll hopefully be available starting early next year. We’re in that fourth quarter, so for all those Albertans that are tired and frustrated, for small-business owners: we’re going to be there with you; we’re going to work with you to get through this so you can come out the other side.

#### Energy Industry Concerns

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, my constituency was built on the strength of our agriculture and natural resources. The hard work and innovation found within our resource sectors have built strong communities while providing wealth to all of Canada. Our resource industries have been hit hard with the global price war and the demand for oil plummeting in recent months, with a barrel of oil being cheaper than a mug of beer at times. To the Minister of Energy: what is your ministry doing to help Albertan producers back on their feet during these unprecedented times?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, with our recovery plan we’re doing everything possible to make sure that from energy to agriculture and forestry, we have the most robust plan in the entire country. We came out first to make sure that we have that recovery plan there, to make sure that Albertans had confidence in their future. We want to make sure that they’re successful going forward.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given that the same interests who are dead set on blocking our energy developments are also those who happily accept the money raised from this prosperity and given that Albertan energy development has resulted in a net \$600 billion going to Ottawa over the past six decades and given that certain politicians in Ottawa say that our oil sector is dead and should be given no federal relief in this time of crisis, to the minister: how is this government refuting the misinformation being brought against such a key piece of our economy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard both in the department of environment and the Department of Energy to be able to help our industry be able to show that they are world class when it comes to environmental standards inside this province. But by far the biggest thing we did was help to make sure that the NDP was fired, and that’s because they spent their time in government actually campaigning against our largest industry,

protesting with their friends at Ecojustice and Leadnow to be able to try to shut down our oil and gas industry. Now Alberta has got a government that's proud of our largest employer, proud of the men and women that work within that industry.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that oil and gas infrastructure cannot be built overnight but is a work of years and decades and given that certain interests have been dead set against any pipeline bringing our product to tidewater and given that the federal government has been long on platitudes but short on action in support of our resource sectors, to the minister: in what ways is our government influencing a federal response to the crisis that has gripped the oil and gas sectors in regard to being unable to move much of our product to tidewater?

2:40

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're working really hard to be able to get pipelines built inside this province. That, again, is a real big difference over the last 18 months. We've got an Alberta government who's pro pipeline working to get pipelines going in every which direction, a sharp contrast to the former NDP government, who spent their time protesting against Keystone, Energy East, Northern Gateway, Trans Mountain even at one point, though they maybe saw the light along the way a little bit on that one. Here's what it comes down to. We've got a pro-energy government in Alberta. We were able to get rid of the NDP, who spent their time protesting with people like Tzepporah Berman to shut down our largest industry. Shame on them.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period, so in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the remainder of the Routine.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Petroleum Products

**Mr. Milliken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I was changing my daughter's diaper – she's on some solids now, and I know every parent can identify because I had Vaseline in my hand – and it hit me: everything around me was made possible by oil and gas energy and the petrochemical sector. Last week you'll remember that in this House we were reminded that the NDP protested pipelines and actively oppose our energy sector. Right there, while changing the diaper, I realized that the NDP and the left will eventually try to cancel Vaseline because it's made from oil.

But it's bigger than that. Everyone is wondering about a cure for COVID. No vaccine is possible without petrochemicals, full stop. On health care we have amazing health care workers, and if I was a nurse, I'd look around and see that almost everything in a hospital is derived from oil: all the PPE, all the machines. The left will try to cancel it all because it's made from oil. Our amazing teachers. Pretty much everything in a school is brought to you by oil and gas: computers, phones, fire-retardant materials in the walls, pens, and even fresh apples in the winter.

If the NDP had their way, we'd be back in the Dark Ages. We'd all be riding horses, but wait: 8 billion people needing – what? – 4 billion horses? GHGs would be called global horse gasses. There you have it: the NDP has now cancelled horses. The opposition needs to open their eyes and see how roads are made, schools are

built, and social programs are paid for. You can scream all you want on Twitter, but it won't build a hospital or fill it with PPE.

Pipelines that come from Alberta come from a global leader on environmental, social, and governance standards. We partner with indigenous groups in sustainable development. We support human rights. Do you think love is love in Russia? It's not. Do you think profits in Venezuela pay for new clean technologies? They don't there, but they do here. We should all support Alberta's ESG-leading energy sector, and it shouldn't take changing a diaper to remind us.

Thank you very much.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of government motions. First is Government Motion 47, to be put in the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of the 2020-21 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund and all matters connected therewith be referred to the Committee of Supply.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 48, also to be put on the Order Paper in my name.

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2020-21 supplementary supply estimates for three hours on Wednesday, November 25, 2020.

Finally, I give oral notice of Government Motion 49, also in my name.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in Alberta, express its support for the government in any future actions that will help protect the public, urge the government to continue to provide the necessary supports to small and medium-sized businesses to assist in their economic recovery, and encourage Albertans to follow all future actions taken by the government in order to help relieve the pressure on our health care system.

**The Speaker:** I believe that the Official Opposition House Leader provided notice of a motion.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice on behalf of the hon. Opposition Leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, of Standing Order 30. Would you like me to read it into the record or wait?

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the alarming and rapid increase in cases in Alberta over the weekend, the federal release on Friday of modelling that indicates an expectation that COVID-19's spread in Alberta will continue to rapidly grow exponentially based on current trajectories, the dangerous level of pressure being experienced in our health care sector due to the recent increases, and the recently growing need for economic supports for small and medium-sized businesses in the province to survive the pandemic.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and table five copies of an article from the *South Peace News* referred



to in the question that I brought forward today, who, I'm sure, would be interested to know what the Minister of Health thinks of their reporting, calling it chasing "conspiracy theories." This is an article regarding the ADM at which the minister spoke, quoting members or former members of the board from the UCP constituency association regarding the minister's remarks regarding Dr. Roger Hodkinson.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured today to rise and table five copies of a letter that an AISH recipient shared with me. I and the Member for St. Albert had the honour of visiting McCauley Apartments earlier in October, and at McCauley Apartments live a whole number of folks who live day to day on AISH. I'm very happy to share this woman's story of struggling with the changes to AISH, and she's calling on this government to readjust . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I'm sure that the document refers directly to the constituent's complaints. I'm happy to have you table it. That's what they're for. I'm sure it's very important, but we'll keep tablings as brief as possible.

### 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. Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration, pursuant to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act: the Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta annual report 2019-20.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent of the Chamber to waive all necessary standing orders to allow the Leader of the Opposition and any member of Executive Council who spoke previously in debate on Government Motion 42 to speak on the record a second time to that motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Earlier today the Official Opposition House Leader gave notice under Standing Order 30 on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. The Leader of the Official Opposition can briefly speak to the urgency of the nature of the debate, not the content, should the debate be granted, but certainly the urgency.

The Official Opposition leader.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for a little bit of confusion here as we are having discussions. Pretty much as we speak, we are also speaking. Yes, we had brought this because, of course, of the urgent nature arising from new federal government modelling, the 300 doctors who recently wrote, the incredible number of new cases that have arisen over the weekend, and the degree of anxiety being experienced by all Albertans. However, it is my understanding that we will now have an opportunity to have all members of the House essentially debate these issues this evening and that those of us who already participated in the general issue will be able to do so again. So I think that the matter can be dealt with in that way, and, as a result, I'm withdrawing this motion.

**The Speaker:** Excellent. Hon. members, the Official Opposition has withdrawn the SO 30 in an arrangement, I assume, to debate

this urgent matter later this evening. I think it's excellent when co-operation can be found in the House. This matter is withdrawn. I consider it dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

2:50

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 205

#### Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act

[Debate adjourned November 16: Mr. Schow speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, is there anybody else that wishes to speak? Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, have you risen to speak to second reading? Is that what you're rising for?

**Member Irwin:** Yes. Absolutely.

**The Speaker:** Perfect.

**Member Irwin:** It is an honour to rise and speak to 205, the genocide remembrance act. I have to say that – sorry, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm which bill is up for debate?

**The Speaker:** Bill 205, the genocide remembrance bill.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you very much. My apologies. Thank you for the confirmation, Mr. Speaker.

I have the honour of serving on the PMB committee, and I have to say that it was really quite troubling to see this government refuse to accept our recommendation in that committee. For anybody who wasn't watching, I just want to confirm some of the things that we talked about in that committee meeting. These are issues that are incredibly important to me, particularly the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks.

One of the things that I raised in that committee meeting is that that piece, the genocide of over 1,200 indigenous women and girls, was not included in this bill. One of the other pieces that I raised was that the genocide that happened under residential schools in this country was also not acknowledged. What we made clear, what our side of the House made clear, in that committee meeting was that by excluding those two pieces, this government would absolutely be denying the real history of our country. We urged the committee to reconsider. It was, you know, really quite troubling to see the sponsor of that bill, Calgary-East, not be able to answer those questions. In fact, he continued to come back to the point that his bill was based on a federal Conservative private member's bill from, I believe – and I'm just going by memory here – early 2015.

One of the pieces that I stressed is that we absolutely agree on our side of the House and as the NDP that we need to acknowledge the historical atrocities that have happened, you know, in our country. We have to acknowledge our past. We all know that without acknowledging our past, we will continue to make those same mistakes. Absolutely. We are not denying that at all.

But the timing was really interesting. I pointed out to that member that the bill upon which he's based his bill was presented prior to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, as many of you know, was presented right here on Treaty 6 territory in Edmonton. Secondly, it was presented prior to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit folks.

I called, we called, our committee called on the government to reassess this bill. Simply basing a private member's bill – and we all know in this House that the UCP have the numbers to pass any bill that they want. We urged the UCP to consider this, to consider what message they would be sending to indigenous folks in our province, to folks across the country, in fact, if they were to exclude the very real history of indigenous peoples. You know, I didn't get a chance in that committee meeting to point out that many of those members who sit on that committee, Cardston-Siksika as an example, have significant indigenous populations in their community. I would have, had I had the time, asked those members, including Cardston-Siksika: how could you face such a large number of constituents and look them in the eyes and say that you don't believe that residential schools and the death and disappearance of thousands of indigenous women are not genocide? How could you possibly support that?

I'm hopeful, you know, long story short – well, maybe long story long, in this case. The government said in that committee meeting: let's bring it to the House, and we'll talk about it here. So to all government members, to those members who serve on that private members' bills committee: I hope that today you've had some time to reflect and that you will address those issues. I know we're going to hear from our Indigenous Relations critic here shortly, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I can tell you that he and myself as the status of women critic, someone who speaks a lot to indigenous women across the province, are hearing from countless indigenous stakeholders who are absolutely sickened that this government would move forward without an acknowledgement of the real concerns of indigenous communities. I look forward to that.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to request unanimous consent of this Assembly to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 206 to my colleague the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** We are on Bill 205 at second reading. Is there anyone else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

I recognize that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was on his feet prior, but given that there will be enough time for both members to speak, we'll have the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, you can know someone your whole life and really never get to know what they truly stand for. There are others that are kind of like a book on a shelf. Where your time is limited, when you're killing time between flights like at an airport bookstore, you skim the pages and kind of take a look at it. Sometimes these become some of your favourite books, and they become some of the biggest learnings in your life. Well, in a prior life I could tell you of some of the bookstores that I have seen on my journeys. Chicago had a great one. Minneapolis was fantastic and so was Philadelphia. There were a couple of times in my travelling that there were a few books that just jumped off that shelf.

Now, there's an old story that you can't judge a book by its cover. I would hazard to say – and I'd bet you a dozen doughnuts – that there are even members and ministers in here that at one point in their lives have actually misjudged a book by its cover or, in that

extension, maybe some people. I know that I have several times in my life, Mr. Speaker, and I hate to admit it, but I've done that with one of my colleagues. You see, I sat in front of this man for about a year, the Member for Calgary-East, and I never knew how deeply this man was concerned about major issues of humanity until he brought forward this bill and made us look at ourselves in the mirror, to talk about this and to reflect on who we are as a people and who we are as a species, quite frankly. You see, this man from Calgary-East: he's very humble, he's a very soft-spoken soul, and I have a ton of respect for him. But when he was bringing forward this item, it wasn't necessarily to the extent that some members might have to pass a bill in this House. He simply wanted us to openly have this conversation.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the average Albertan knows the significance of pulling a private member's bill. It's kind of like pulling the magic ticket, quite honestly, or the golden ticket, as it were. I don't know how you guys come up with who gets to go, but in my visual mind it's that you kind of put all our names in a rolling drum, you spin it around, and pull out those tickets. Now, the random probability of chance on that: I've heard some members speak in here that they've been in here for over six years and have never had that chance. So the weighty significance of a private member pulling a bill so that we can talk about it in here is a pretty big deal. Not many people out there like Mondays, but we as private members love Mondays. It's the day that private members' business is pretty much all that we talk about in here. The fact that that gentleman chose this time to pull this item to talk about: well, it's a pretty big deal.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Some of the sad parts about this word "genocide": the significance of this oftentimes gets underrepresented. You see, Mr. Speaker, we have to actually look at ourselves in the mirror on this. We have to address the horrific truth that as a species these heinous acts have spanned cultures, times, countries. Really, we as a species single out another group or population to literally try to eradicate them, not in singularity, as a single act of passion or fear, but as a systemic approach to eradication that does not spare an entire population.

This word "genocide": from the United Nations site I found the origins of this word. The word "genocide" was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1944 in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin developed the term partly in response to the Nazi policies of systemic murder of the Jewish people during the Holocaust but also in response to previous instances in history of targeted actions aimed at the destruction of particular groups of people. The definition of genocide found in article II of the UN convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide: I'll read the definition for awareness.

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with [the] intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial . . . group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Now, here is the risk, Mr. Speaker. We can rattle these definitions off, we can throw around the word and use it out of context, and we

can severely diminish its meaning. As history showed us, there was an act that was performed by the Nazi regime that was so cold, so calculated, and well documented that a new word had to be invented to describe it. We don't have a day of the year or a month where we discuss what I feel brings to the conversation what has taken place or led up to these events. I went through our public school system, I've attended many Remembrance Day ceremonies, I've heard stories from the old veterans and seniors about what happened during World War II, but none of these stories filled in the blanks of how it may have happened.

I remember seeing *Schindler's List* in theatres, and it brought out that terrible act of dehumanizing a group based on their religion, in fact demonizing them and finally exterminating them, Mr. Speaker. The scene of the little girl with a red jacket in a black and white movie stands out as Schindler's character in the movie happens upon the extermination of the ghettos, as she runs away, and only later will that little jacket show up without the little girl, who has seemingly vanished, which seemed to be a pivotal turning point in that movie and, quite frankly, in Schindler's soul.

I had unanswered questions. I hate to say it, but I never fully sought them out. Those questions were sitting in the back of my mind, and it came to the forefront because of one of those trips I'd taken. When killing some time in Minneapolis between flights, I looked into a bookstore. I went in there, and this one jumped off the shelf simply because of its title. It was *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. The paperback was thick, the cover was bold, and it was essentially a Nazi flag, complete with a swastika. I bought that book, but I dared not read it on the plane nor in the hotel lobbies but in the room when I was on the road over the next few weeks. You see, Mr. Speaker, that symbol has been emblazoned into our western culture so hard that it emphasized and emboldened that meaning of hatred, and I didn't want to be seen with that even with me.

In other business trips over to Germany, that symbol is completely outlawed. You're not allowed to have that in public. That's how intense this was. The book gave me lots of questions, actually, and unknowingly I've had these questions for a number of years. How could something so terrible as the Nazis and the horrific acts have happened?

A couple of years prior I was in Karlsruhe and had to visit Baden-Baden. I was there on business. I didn't realize how close I was to the stronghold of where that ideology had come to be and enveloped Europe and, quite frankly, most of the world in conflict. The significance of that region, the proximity I'd been in to those death camps, that I later found out were in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*: it really hit home at that point.

You see, this book was written by an American journalist who, in Germany at the time, during the rise of the Nazis, was exposed to it though not fully because he had access to the outside printed word. He was a journalist himself. Who didn't have that luxury were the German people, the citizens themselves. What he had said in there was that he started to see those populations change, their attitudes change, and admittedly he'd also seen the start of his attitude changing just by being exposed to that culture of what was taking hold. It began slowly and subtly and then began to take hold and then run away.

Postwar, from the Nuremberg trials, many of those documents were held in the U.S.A., and journalists and scholars from all around the world after the war was won had access to that information. The name of that journalist was William L. Shirer. Several years later, at the war's end, he pored over those documents, and he pored over his own journals and diaries from that period, and he confirmed his observations or provided additional clarity in

some of the journals he was writing as the events were taking place while he was in Germany.

The author broke the events into three parts. He explored the rise of that leader and that party as well as the economy and the ideology that were needed for the rise of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. There are parallels between the other brutal acts of genocide and some which were identified by the Member for Calgary-East's bill. The intent is to try to make sure that we understand and know these turning points and the things before they do take hold, I believe a very honest and pure intent, to make sure we have the dialogue so we can address those core items so that we don't have to have another item, and to combat the causes of genocide by taking April in each year

- (i) to recognize the impact of the atrocities of genocide on individuals who belong to the many different religious and ethnic communities of Alberta,
- (ii) to remember . . . the victims of genocide,
- (iii) to promote better understanding of the causes of genocide, and
- (iv) to increase awareness of genocides that have occurred across the world.

This bill will also require the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to table a report within one year that outlines strategies to combat the causes of genocide, including consulting with the Minister of Education when preparing that report.

I came across another paper when you start to research this, and it starts to break down some of the key elements. Heinrich Böll Stiftung wrote a paper that I came across, and it cites six elements that are indicators of where this environment could lend itself to allow atrocities like genocide to take place. Another person came up with a formula, and when you multiply these elements, it literally starts to spell out the recipe for disaster. There's a chart which compares the acts in which mass populations were targeted for extermination. Mr. Speaker, to read these words on a page still doesn't have that gravity. So many events took place that we actually have these.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we support Bill 205 and take that reflection in the mirror to make sure that we can stop these items from taking place again. Thank you.

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

I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 205, Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. You know, certainly, of course, when we think of genocide, obviously our minds immediately go to some of the atrocious, horrible tragedies that have happened in our history, some not so long ago, some quite some time ago, and the previous member, that was just speaking, spent some time talking about what happened in Europe in the '30s and '40s with the Nazis and the genocide that occurred there. He's certainly correct that that was genocide on a scale that I think most of us to this day can't even imagine.

**3:10**

But when I think about that, I think about a book that I read a few times. It was written by Elie Wiesel, and it's called *Night*. It's not a very long book, but it talks a lot about his experience being deported and being in camp and then, you know, surviving the camp and what went on after that. I think what struck me and why I read the book multiple times is the incredible insight that the author provides the reader with, and that is about that it's more than just a phrase to say: never again. I think that we all understand that "never again"

is something that the survivors of the Holocaust and of that genocide regularly say, but I think we can't claim to endorse that if we actually don't take steps to ensure that things like that never happen again. I think we can all agree that one of the most important ways to ensure that something doesn't happen again is to recognize it when it does happen even on a smaller scale, even when it's very close to home, even when it's right in front of us.

I would suggest that the member bringing forward this bill and deliberately leaving out a group of Canadians, indigenous people, by not recognizing not just the cultural genocide but the genocide of indigenous people here in Canada: that is an absolute failure on our part to do everything that we can to ensure that it not only stops but never again happens. I think part of the beauty of having a day of remembrance, whatever that remembrance might be, in this case to remember the millions of lives that were extinguished and lost as a result of genocide around the world and, I would suggest, here in our own country – the beauty of having a day like that or a piece of legislation like this would be to ensure that we are always looking around but also looking close to home to ensure that we are not excusing any behaviour or overlooking any behaviour that may not look like what we think a genocide looks like but that what we know is a genocide here in Canada.

While I agree that I am happy that this piece of legislation does condemn that and recognizes the importance of awareness, not just for us, for this generation, but for the next as well, I am certainly glad that we are talking about it. However, I think that we fall short if we don't recognize that our failure to include indigenous people and what happened in this piece of legislation is a failure, is an absolute failure, on our part.

I think, you know, all of us – I don't know about other members. I know that there are a number of residential schools that still exist. I know that in my constituency, just across the border on the lands where Poundmaker is right now, there used to be a residential school, and there is still a carriage house that is still there. The actual brick building of the school is gone, but the carriage house is still there, and it's really a chilling reminder. But, even worse than that, if you walk a little bit past that house and you go into one of the fields, they will tell you – the people that work on that land will tell you – just to be careful where you go because there are a number of unmarked graves there.

Now, I think that when you're on that land, it's hard to even describe, actually. I didn't think that I would feel it physically the few times that I've been there, but you do feel it. Then the stories are told by some of the older people that work there or who, you know, tell the stories that have been told there. They tell you about the tragedies that occurred right on that land. I think that if you look around Alberta, there were schools all around Alberta. There was actually another one in St. Albert. It is no longer there. There's a graveyard there on that site, and there's a place to remember there as well. But not far from here.

For us to deliberately or to knowingly – we've brought up to the government or to the private member that this bill is great. You know, it certainly does something to raise awareness and for us all to think about what has happened and what we can do going forward to ensure that it never again happens. But our failure, our collective failure, to not include every act of genocide in every group that has been the target is truly a failure. What is the point of selecting some and leaving out others, particularly when these are our citizens? These are people in our country. Our neighbours could have relatives that were impacted by this.

So I'm incredibly disappointed. I wish that the genocide towards indigenous people and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and the '60s scoop were included here as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

You know, staff in the Premier's office have said that these atrocities are not genocide and that the NDP position is extreme. Just to be clear, these are not NDP positions in any way. We are just repeating what experts have said, what the definition – I mean, it seems like sometimes the UCP is intent on repeating a UN definition; other times, you know, they're kind of slugging the UN, so it seems with this particular piece of legislation, but if you look at the actual definition of genocide, I don't actually understand why you would leave out this entire group of people.

Rather than following the alternative history of extremists that the UCP has literally recruited and included in the government, not in government members, but has included in the workings of government, extremists like Chris Champion and Paul Bunner. He is retired now, I understand, but these are individuals who have extensive writing that is published. This isn't speculation on our part. You can look it up, and you can read for yourself what the positions are. So while I'm not surprised that government members would sort of fall right in line with the people that are working for and with the UCP, I'm actually stunned that they would deliberately not include this group of people.

I wish the UCP would consider the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is one thing to talk about how you support indigenous communities and how you want to work towards a better future and all of those things; it is fine to say all of those things. What you say, though – I'm sorry, and by "you" I mean you in general – doesn't matter. It actually doesn't matter. It is what you do. If you say that you agree with the recommendations or you agree with the history or you agree with the tragedy of the history of this country towards indigenous people and what this country has done, if you don't take the steps to make things better or to go in a more positive direction, then your words are just shallow, empty. They're meaningless.

You know, the Minister of Indigenous Relations says that he's not in favour of symbolic gestures and abstract definitions. Following these recommendations is not symbolic or abstract. They have been requested, and they are tangible, and they are necessary. I think, you know, for those people that learn a lot from history, particularly if you're looking at European history, looking at the '30s and the '40s and what happened in the Holocaust and the genocide, particularly books like Elie Wiesel's book, *Night*, the most important thing is to learn from the past and not to repeat the mistake in the future. It seems that the member, by deliberately leaving out a group that is very close to home, that is right here in this country, if you fail, if you absolutely fail to be current and to recognize that this is a group in need of further protection and in need of further remembrance . . .

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

I see the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity to rise and speak to this very important piece of legislation. I want to begin by going back to a time in my life when I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As members of the House will know, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a neighbour to Rwanda. The Kivus, the two provinces on the far eastern side of the Congo that neighbour Rwanda, were as enthralled and involved in the Rwandan genocide as Rwanda itself. The differences that happened in Rwanda in that tragic time were ones based on ethnicity between Hutus and Tutsis, but those differences crossed borders. Those ethnic tribes and their conflict crossed borders. When we saw the end of the Rwandan genocide, I believe in 1994, we did not see the end of the genocide as a whole;

it continued on. The consequences of that genocide are deeply, deeply imprinted on the people of that area of central Africa.

3:20

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that when I lived there as a missionary, volunteering with a group of nuns who had an orphanage, a centre for malnourished children, a hospital, who had a library, who had all these different facilities, the number one thing that you'd notice when you went there is that there's an age group there that just doesn't exist. It's the children that are dead, that do not exist anymore. I had a French teacher and a Lingala teacher, who saw his family murdered in front of him as the overflow of that Rwandan genocide came into the Congo.

The carnage is not metaphorical. The carnage of the genocide is real. What we saw continuing on, even after the machetes were away, were policies of starvation, policies of local tribal warlords that said: you eat; you don't. Mr. Speaker, if you have not seen a child dying of starvation, I pray you never do. I pray no Member of this Legislative Assembly ever sees that intimately. The truth of it, the intimate, repulsive atrocity that is a child in this world dying of starvation, is gross, but what makes it all the more gross and evil is that it's done intentionally because of the ethnicity, the tribe, or the religion of that child.

This isn't new in Africa. We've seen this lots. We have a member of our own Legislative Assembly, the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, who is a member of the Ibo tribe of Nigeria, very proud people. If you've ever been to any of their community gatherings, you'll know that they're very proud. But that doesn't come out of nowhere. They've been through hardships together. In the 1970s 3 million Ibo died from a civil war that happened in the country. The authoritarian, militaristic regime had an enforced policy of starvation. They estimate that 1 and a half million of those were children. One and a half million children: forced starvation again.

We remember the Holodomor, Mr. Speaker, the tragedy of Stalin's brutal regime manifested in its most meticulous way: thoughtful, intentional starvation of an entire nation. That tragedy has repeated itself over and over again, whether it be through the policy of starvation and more and more children and vulnerable dying first and eventually leading to those who are fit and working age. The men are often the last to go; they're the healthiest. But they all end up dying, intentionally killed en masse. Entire villages, communities, cities, a nation, a people: attempted to be wiped out, off the map, and gone.

Mr. Speaker, I visited northern Iraq in 2009, just before we saw the rise of what was a terrifying group called Daesh, or ISIS, which had a policy against particularly the Yazidis but a number of others in the areas as well. That small ethnic group that the radical Islamic terrorists saw as heterodox to their variety of Wahhabist Sunni Islam was unfit not just to believe in but for one to be on the Earth and hold those positions. The Yazidis had to be wiped out. They became slaves, sex slaves even – twisted – young girls, in an attempt to remove them from the north Iraqi map, the same area we saw genocides before.

We saw that at the time of the Ottoman Empire hundreds of thousands if not millions – we don't know the numbers – of Assyrians, minority Christian groups were slaughtered by sword and by musket, by all sorts of artillery, killed en masse, military war waged against a people because they held the wrong beliefs or they were born of the wrong parents.

I feel it is so important, Mr. Speaker, that we start this conversation with this and everything else on the table, on the table in front of us. Right next to the Mace is the honest, brutal reality of what a genocide is.

Now, we heard the member earlier, my hon. friend from Lac St. Anne-Parkland, talk about the origins of the word, from the Greek for tribe or people, and from the Latin for killing: genocide. It's meant quite literally, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing metaphorical about this. I wish it were. I truly wish this were a metaphor. I wish this were an allegory. I wish we were warning against the potential of wiping entire populations off the map of human existence. But that is not the case. We're talking today about a real thing that our brothers and sisters in the human race committed against others. The intrinsic evil that we saw cannot be divorced from the act, cannot be separated in any way. It needs to be shone brightly for what it is.

There were genocides committed beyond the ones listed. That's true, Mr. Speaker. At the same time as the Assyrians experienced genocide by the Ottoman Empire, we also saw Greeks en masse – an ethnic cleansing is a cute way of putting it compared to the brutal truth of what it was.

We can look at the Cambodian genocide. If anyone's been to Cambodia and they've seen the remains of the ruin of the Khmer Rouge – I can tell you; I was there. There's a generation of parentless children. They don't know who their parents are. As a part of the ethnic cleansing and the genocide that the Khmer did to their own people, they separated children from parents. Anyone with glasses, Mr. Speaker, seen to be an intellectual, spoke another language: murdered, isolated, killed, hidden, children wandering the tropical rainforest parentless, without any supports, often dying – if they did survive, as orphans – a situation of total and complete destitution.

That, Mr. Speaker, is not on the list today. Nonetheless we recognize it. We recognize that atrocity. The fact that it is not currently listed by the House of Commons in Canada does not belittle its reality. We must stand tall and acknowledge those tragedies. I acknowledge it here today, that, for example, the Cambodian genocide was one of the greatest evils perpetrated against humans and humankind.

We recognize this in the purposes of the bill, (b)(ii), "to remember those who were the victims of genocide." I read that, and I realized that all bets are off. I support this. I ask every single member across the aisle very earnestly to support it as well. The truth is that I hear genuine concerns from the members opposite on the recognition of the atrocities and horrible evils that happened to our First Nations and indigenous peoples in Canada. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that our words do matter. They do. That's why this Legislature matters, because words have force. Words have meaning, and I stand here today recognizing that residential schools were wrong and evil. I say it here on the floor of the Chamber of the Alberta Legislature, and I recognize it.

Not everything will meet the standard and be recognized as a genocide. That does not diminish the reality of that atrocity and that evil. We can do both. We can recognize these today and also recognize other wrongs that have happened, wrongs that have happened here in our own province. I recognize it today. I think it's important that we do. I think it's important that the words spoken by the Harper government recognizing the wrongs of the residential school program were important and should not be lost. I do believe in the power of words, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the member who spoke previously. Words do matter. They're not all, but they're important. We are legislators. We stand here. We speak. If we believe not that, we believe in not much.

I ask everyone to support this bill for the importance of the words, Mr. Speaker.

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

I see that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this private member's bill, brought by the Member for Calgary-East. The first thing I would like to do is thank the member for bringing forward this private members' business. Certainly, my colleagues have been on the record expressing their support of this undertaking by the hon. member, and I would like to add my voice of support to that. My hon. colleagues have also enumerated ways in which we find it is likely that this bill could be improved, and it is in that spirit that I would like to offer some comments this afternoon as we debate private members' business.

3:30

In the postwar era there are few novelists more controversial or seminal to reading postwar German history than Günter Grass, who talks about how Germany's Nazi past is unmasterable, as he wrote about it. Now, he attempted in his writing to grapple with it up until his death in the early 21st century. Indeed, the trajectory of Germany's postwar reckoning with what happened during the Holocaust, similarly in France and Poland and elsewhere, was not a straight line, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it took many years of understanding the impact of genocide, what it is, and how it defines a nation.

Now, I was first in junior high when I was a student of German. After having learned French, I also was able to learn German and saw a concentration camp for the first time – that would have been in 1990 – and then returned to Germany for several months of an exchange in high school and familiarized myself more with the German postwar experience and what actually happened in those years between 1939 and 1945. Later, before I went to university, I spent some time in Israel, all told a couple of trips, pretty well a year. I learned a bit of Hebrew, learned a bit of Arabic, and I'll never forget visiting Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and seeing on the wall a number of the quotes and sort of reckonings with what western countries did in response to the Holocaust: Canada's experience, for example, with the *St. Louis*, the ship that we turned around and, in fact, that our own Prime Minister apologized for rather recently, in the last few years, and the response of other developed countries.

I remember, then, after I had spent some time in the Middle East, I went to university. I remember reading *The Banality of Evil* by Hannah Arendt, which was her series of *New Yorker* essays and reporting on the Eichmann trials. It was called *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and there were the Nuremberg trials – right? – that she was reporting on. At Nuremberg we finally, then, learned – Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom – of what happened during the Holocaust through a very definitions oriented and due process oriented lens; that is to say, at Nuremberg and during the Eichmann trials in Jerusalem and subsequently there was actual criminality that was defined in the acts. There was an actual undertaking of the bureaucratic steps that were taken to effect such horrible crimes. Those crimes were then prosecuted with due process. There was a record created. There was then an International Criminal Court created.

So all of these things were then documented in that postwar era, where much of that, for example with the Armenian genocide in the early 20th century, sort of reckoning hadn't happened in that regularized kind of way, where there is due process and there is, then, a record for memory.

This brings us up to the mid-1990s, Mr. Speaker. At that point I was learning of what was going on in Rwanda, what was happening in the Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict. I knew all of those things and had been all of those places and had a way to understand all of those global conflicts and all of the ways in which they shaped the postwar era before I knew the numbers of the treaties covering

Alberta. I had learned all of those things before I understood fully what had happened down the road from the acreage I grew up on. I knew all those things before I knew basic words in Cree. These were, you know, folks that lived right down the road. I knew what happened in those countries before I knew what happened here.

In my grade 3 textbook – I'll never forget it – we learned about indigenous peoples. I don't even know how to say it. They were French textbooks. They had come from Quebec. Instead of saying "indigenous people," or "autochtones" – that's the word in French, "autochtones" – they described folks as "les sauvages." That was how I learned of my neighbours. There was an erasure of memory there, of history, a lack of definitions, due process, any sense of what happened here, a record. None of that existed for me. I was well into graduate school before I fully appreciated all of those things.

All of this is to say, Mr. Speaker, that I deeply appreciate the undertaking of the member to bring forward this bill. It remains a little bit confusing to me why there would be an enumeration of events, a picking and choosing of some, because we know that historical memory changes over time. It certainly did even in the postwar era of understanding and fully internalizing in Germany the effects of the Holocaust and bringing language to what happened there, both within Germany and outside of it. You know, it took time.

It wasn't until 1985 that there was a sort of generation-defining speech on the floor of the German Parliament by then President von Weizsäcker, and it was a major kind of definition and historical moment in Germany when he spoke very passionately about the country's crimes, the need to keep that memory alive, and said, "[Whoever] closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection." It was a very, very powerful statement by the then President of Germany in a big speech to the Bundestag. It was 1985. It was quite a bit later than even the Nuremberg trials.

Mr. Speaker, all this is to say that when we know more and when we know better, we do better. Many of these things go on over time, and they benefit from the creation of that record, which is what brings me to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In fact, the Nuremberg trials set the stage for the International Criminal Court, for the definition of crimes against humanity, for the definition of genocide, for that process not just on the legal side but then that process of reckoning and reconciliation, frankly. That process was undertaken in South Africa after apartheid fell and provided some of the animation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission here in Canada and some of the model, certainly not all. We learned more. We learned records upon records. We heard story upon story. We saw much more evidence, and that's why that history should be in this bill as well.

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

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleague from Lethbridge-West for her impassioned remarks and to the mover for bringing this bill forward today. I want to say that I think it is generally a good bill that we have in front of us, and I think it definitely has good intentions. I do want to echo, though, what my colleagues have said before in that I think that it is missing a very big piece of genocide that is very close to home, that happened here. It happened within a few generations, and the impacts of that genocide continue to live on today.

3:40

The impacts, as the Education critic, I can tell, are alive and well, specifically when it comes to parents and grandparents not always

feeling welcomed in their child's school, and for good reason. Their parents certainly weren't welcome in their school. They had a very different educational experience, and often it was filled with trauma and neglect and assault, physically and sexually. I think that, again, the intention of this bill is a really good intent, and I think it definitely takes some positive steps, but I think the biggest one that's missing is the genocide that took place and the impacts that it has still today right here in Canada.

I want to say that having a last name that has German, probably Jewish, ancestry, that I'm still trying to be able to trace back, and having had grandfathers who fought in both the First and Second World Wars, I am very familiar with the impacts and the legacy of the genocide of the Holocaust. I am glad that we are taking steps through our curriculum, through what we do here in this place, and through potentially legislation to make sure that the ongoing impacts are recognized by the people of Alberta. On my mother's side, my mom's maiden name was Krupa, and her mom's maiden name was Chodan, both of Ukrainian ancestry, and the impacts of the Holodomor I also know and feel very deeply and personally. Again, we've taken steps in this place over a few Legislatures to make sure that the impacts of the Holodomor have been recognized, that they are learned, and that we ensure that we fight back against them.

The atrocity towards indigenous people: not only is it not adequately reflected in this bill or in other acts that we've taken in this Legislature – I appreciate that in the last composition of the Legislature there was a formal apology both to residential school survivors and those who didn't survive residential schools as well as to those who were impacted by the '60s scoop. Arguably, by any sense of a definition, those atrocities, from my understanding, have been characterized as genocides.

When I think back to postcolonial theory, one of the best ways that we can move forward as a society, a postcolonial society, is to make sure that we acknowledge and own the impacts of our history, the truth of our history. When I think about the Wabanaki on the east coast, for example, some of the earliest accounts of colonization on the east coast are of ships arriving and cutting the breasts off women, cutting the breasts off women so that they couldn't feed their young. That's genocide. Spreading blankets that are knowingly infected to wipe out entire communities and families: that's genocide.

We continue to talk about the impacts of these very aggressive, very targeted attempts to wipe out a civilization, a civilization that has amazingly fought back and finds ways today to thrive. But we have regularly put people in positions of power and authority, and by "we" I mean the Premier's office specifically hiring somebody with a very clear, documented history of downplaying the impacts of residential schools, downplaying the impacts of colonization in our society. While I appreciate that Mr. Bunner has now retired, it took his decision to move on. It wasn't leadership from the Premier himself that made that decision that the words of somebody who had documented so many downright racist statements, that the person who had written all those things shouldn't continue to write things for the Premier. It was Mr. Bunner who showed that he was going to move on. It wasn't the Premier, and I think that that speaks volumes.

Another example we have, of course, is Dr. Chris Champion, who very clearly has documented multiple times that he believes that the blanket exercise should have no place in schools. If you haven't been part of a blanket exercise, I really want to encourage people to go to it with an open mind. I think that they are powerful ways of learning and engaging with one another and with parts of our history here in this province.

Talking about residential schools, it's been said by him and others around him – again, he's been given lots of opportunities to pen recommendations for the curriculum. Mind you, yes, those are recommendations, but when teachers who've been committing their work in this field for years want to give their feedback, they're given two days. They're given a very limited number of them who are able to participate moving forward even though previously it was well over 300 who were engaged in that. Academics who were part of the steering groups, who specifically come to this work of developing social studies curriculum with a world view that acknowledges the truth of what we've experienced here and a desire to seek reconciliation and to be able to have a society that honours our shared history and finds ways to support each other in moving forward: when those academics are dismissed from the process but one specific academic who has a history of writing things that are racist and very offensive to indigenous leaders is welcome to take several months to write his feedback and give it, I think it says that this government doesn't take the genocide against indigenous people seriously.

We have had a minister of the Crown say that he's not in favour of symbolic gestures or abstract definitions, and I want to say that the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are not symbolic; they are not abstract. They are concrete, and they have been requested as a tangible and documented initiative to be able to help us achieve truth and reconciliation. When the community specifically says that they don't support the employment of Paul Bunner and Chris Champion in the roles that they've been appointed to by the Premier's office – I think that it is very disrespectful to survivors of this genocide.

And then here today we have a bill that I think, probably for lack of consultation, continues to omit one of the biggest, closest to home forms of genocide I hope we will ever see on these lands. But the only way to make sure that we don't repeat the atrocities of the past is to learn from them.

Now, when people say, "Well, children are just too young to learn about residential schools; it's too tough a concept for children to have to grapple with; maybe once they're in grade 4 or grade 5, then they can learn about those atrocities," I doubt that anyone here wants to wait until grade 4 or grade 5 to talk about both of the world wars. I doubt that anybody here wants to wait until grade 4 or grade 5 to talk about the genocide of the Holocaust and what that meant for people who suffered in so many concentration camps, people who tried to live off the grid and tried to survive such a genocide, that was being inflicted on them.

Now, when we talk to children in kindergarten about these things, we don't talk with the same detail as we would with somebody who's older, but we don't hide the truth either. I know that kindergarten classes across this province did – you probably did it yourselves or with your children, where you take the pencil and you take the little piece of tissue paper and you dip it in the glue and you stick it on a poppy. It's one of those sort of classic art projects, where children create a poppy and then they talk about poppies. They often hear *In Flanders Fields*, and they learn about why Canada dispatched so many of our own to go fight in Europe. I have to say that the little people in my life, who I love deeply, get it, and they're smart, and they're capable.

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

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall with about three minutes.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see this bill come forward and that we are talking about condemning and recognizing genocide and educating the public about it and discussing

strategies, what we can learn from the history, how we can prevent similar things happening again. As my colleagues have mentioned, it's a good bill. We agree with everything this bill recognizes. All those are significant, significant incidents, and they should be recognized. We should learn from them.

3:50

But we live here in Alberta; we live here in Canada. If we talk about Alberta, the entire province is covered by three treaties, treaties 6, 7, and 8, and I think it's quite surprising to see that we are missing that, the treatment of indigenous people at the hands of the state. That's missing from this piece of legislation. We do know now, through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, from various governments seeking apologies and committing to work with indigenous people on residential schools, how they were treated at different times. So we do know that that's significant for indigenous communities and that that's significant for every other Canadian as well – Canadian children, youth, everyone – to learn about and reflect on how indigenous communities have been treated in this country, in this province.

While we are talking about things that happened quite far – and I agree that we should be talking about those, too, but we should start at home. We should recognize the treatment, what indigenous people went through, so I hope that the sponsor will consider including that at Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I hesitated to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Calgary-East to close debate on Bill 205. The hon. member.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank and extend my appreciation to all my colleagues who had expressed their support, views, and comments about Bill 205. Genocide recognition is a contentious issue, and the intention of Bill 205 is to focus on genocide remembrance, condemnation, and prevention. To avoid divisive arguments over any particular genocide, Bill 205 relies on the list recognized by the House of Commons because it represents the broad consensus of the nation. This bill does not seek to encroach on the jurisdiction of the federal government as the crime of genocide was defined and its corresponding consequences were determined in the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide in 1948, where Canada is one of the signatory countries.

But the responsibility of commemorating, condemning, and preventing genocide does not reside only with the federal government, Mr. Speaker. We all share that same duty to adhere to the generally accepted principles in preserving human rights and dignity. That is why Bill 205, section 3 thereof, seeks to make the month of April of each year the genocide remembrance, condemnation, and prevention month.

This provision does not limit the remembrance and condemnation to a certain genocide. I believe that there is a lack of awareness of the occurrence of genocides, their causes, and the grave nature of these events. We see this most clearly when people make careless jokes or inappropriate comparisons between a particular event and a genocide. We must acknowledge the different root causes of genocide. The Nazis had the thought that their race, Aryans, was more superior than the Jews while the Ukrainian famine and genocide were caused by an ideology to convert small farms into state-run collectives and punish

those who could be a threat to authorities or those who do not want to follow this path to their goal.

It is also important to pay attention to the assertions of an existence of hate and racism around us. If we look at hatred and racism, these are some of the triggering factors that I see which will lead eventually to commission of the other elements of this wrongdoing.

Like I said previously, initiatives like the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation and the work to modernize the Police Act demonstrate our commitment to meaningful reconciliation and to empower indigenous communities so we can be partners in prosperity. The government has committed to improving the lives of our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, let me just emphasize that the government has been continuously working with the indigenous people towards reconciliation and listening to the concerns of their families and jobs.

Let me conclude by highlighting the fact that our province continues to be of high regard with respecting human dignity and human rights. We endlessly extend our support, accept the victims and their families here. We provide shelter and a new beginning to all that have been victimized by unfair treatment and abandoned human rights. With all of this, we demonstrate respect and compassion. We act as one, and we do not pick or choose whom to support. This has been our response and unwavering commitment, with a great desire to maintain peace and harmony in our communities.

I again thank all my colleagues for expressing their support, opinions, remarks on this bill. Your thoughts are all well taken into account. I look forward to expound more about the desire and the purpose of Bill 205 in the coming debate in Committee of the Whole as I would readily answer all the questions surrounding this bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate. Thank you.

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

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a second time]

## Bill 206

### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

**The Acting Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has risen.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we begin debate on Bill 206, I am notifying the House that I will be recusing myself because of a perceived or potential conflict of interest.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, a request for unanimous consent to change the sponsorship of Bill 206 was granted earlier today. The Order Paper will now indicate that the sponsor of Bill 206 is the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. An updated electronic copy of the bill showing the new sponsor will be posted to the Assembly website shortly, and printed copies of the updated bill will be made available to members as soon as possible.

On that, I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has risen.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to move second reading of Bill 206, the private member's bill Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying thank you to the Assembly today for granting unanimous consent for this bill to be able to proceed and for the sponsorship to change. I have to say that it's a real honour for me as a private member and especially as a rookie



private member to be able to stand in this House at all, let alone move a piece of private members' legislation in the House that has had so much conversation and has such a deep linkage within the fabric of our province.

4:00

The idea of property rights has been an ongoing discussion within Alberta for decades, but I have to say that I know that, for myself, that was a foundational core of one of the reasons why I first joined the legacy Wildrose Party back in the day. It was also a foundational core of many people putting their names on the ballot, specifically when the former Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, was introduced. This has been regarded by many in the province, especially those who are opposed to the property rights restrictions in that bill, as a piece of draconian legislation. This resulted in multiple rallies around the province, where hundreds of people could be seen. This was people from rural Alberta, urban Alberta, and everywhere in between, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, is really a culmination of listening to Albertans for going on a decade to hear their concerns and to amend legislation to make it better and stronger. Ultimately, as members of the Legislature that is our job today and every day, to make our legislation stronger, to protect Albertans, and to give them what they need and help and support them. Like I said, many experts have said that not having full and fair access to compensation and not having courts to appeal these decisions was draconian, and this is, like I said, one of the reasons why this bill was even brought forward in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, you know, first of all, to all those who are watching, that this is a very important piece of legislation to them and to me as well. I'm not going to stand here and say that I wrote this bill. I'm not going to stand here and say that I personally put my feet on the ground and did all the work on this bill because I didn't. Obviously, now I'm the sponsor of this bill, for reasons that we all know, but I want to give credit to all those people who have been working so hard on this bill for the last 10 years and even before that, for protecting property rights and being advocates of that. Some of these people were doing this before I was even born, so I want to give credit where credit is due, to the former member Pat Stier, who did an incredible amount of work on property rights, Phil Roland, Norm Ward, and actually somebody that I know from the south, Mr. Aaron Brauer. They've done a considerable amount of work in advocating for property rights and mobilizing people, so I just want to say thank you to them on the record today. *Hansard*, I will get you the spelling of those names because I'm sure you'll be asking me for them within the next 10 minutes.

In the election I had many constituents even speak to me, Mr. Speaker, about the need for property rights protections, and I know that these property rights protections were advocated for and promised in our platform upon re-election. Actually, our platform went even further than what Bill 206 suggests and is hoping to pass and hoping to put into law here in Alberta, but it's very, very important that we get this passed as soon as possible.

Former President George Washington said that freedom and property are inseparable, that you can't have one without the other. We know this to be true, Mr. Speaker. Property rights are essential to economic growth. They're essential to the rights and freedoms of Canadians and of Albertans. It's an opportunity for us to create fairness within Alberta's landscape and restore our reputation as a fair place for all investors and wealth creators. Passing Bill 206 would be a good signal to the world and Canadian investors around the world that we believe in giving everyone equal opportunity to create wealth and create jobs. It creates a more fair playing field.

Property rights are the foundation that allows entrepreneurs to take risks, build businesses, and create wealth for themselves and others.

You know, we often talk about things like urban versus rural or whatever, and I'm one of those people who's very blessed to have what I call a rurban riding. I have a small portion of Medicine Hat with a large population – a larger population, I guess, not in comparison to some of the urbanites in the room. You guys have some pretty large urban constituencies. I know that, for me, I have the city of Brooks and the city of Medicine Hat, part of it at least, in my constituency boundaries, and the rest of my riding is rural. Rural Albertans, of course, have a very robust, high awareness of property rights and how they implicate and interact with their everyday lives, and my constituency of Brooks-Medicine Hat is no exception to that.

It's very important, property rights, for the agriculture community and irrigation sector as it addresses, specifically, the issue of land expropriation and the effect that it would have on water licensing and arrangements like that. Alberta's agriculture sector contributes \$9.2 billion in GDP and employs over 70,000 Albertans, something that I have said in the House before and a very notable statistic, and we know that in our province after COVID, of course, now the need to diversify and the need to support these efforts is important. We can't do that without proper protection for landowners in place. We have – I think \$815 million was invested most recently in irrigation infrastructure, and I want to thank the minister of agriculture for, like, probably the 49th time now for that historic investment, because for constituencies like mine that investment can't be overstated, and it actually makes me so excited to be a part of advocating for that and to see our government moving forward on that.

Let's talk about Bill 206. If passed, this bill would ensure the following: number one, when the Crown rescinds a statutory consent that may lead to financial losses of the holder of that consent, then the holder is able to bring forward a claim for those losses. So when the Crown rescinds statutory consent that may lead to financial losses of the holder, then that holder is able to bring a claim forward to recover them. It's always important to make sure major infrastructure projects are able to proceed as, of course, major infrastructure projects employ thousands of Albertans. We've seen lots of money and resources go towards supporting major infrastructure and protecting critical infrastructure such as the former Bill 1 did, something that I was also proud to support and that, ironically enough, was a private member's idea of mine that I was very honoured to have brought forward by the Minister of Justice at the time, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

While it's important to make sure that these projects go forward, we also need to be able to have the laws in place for judicial review and fair compensation to protect property owners; for example, on land ownership and expropriation by a city growing. Let's say that you're the owner of water licences. It's important to have your extensive livestock operation, but a growing municipality decided that it was crucial to their growth plans. There should be full and fair compensation for you as that landowner if that city needs to expand and you were planning to expand as well. There needs to be a way for everyone to benefit from that, and ensuring those property rights is a must.

If the Crown expropriates the land and cuts off the farmer's access to a water supply, that would result in financial losses through having to finance another water source, so that would be investing in irrigation or pipelines or some kind of infrastructure to get that water to their cattle, or they would have to reduce the number of cattle they own, which, as we all know, especially in rural Alberta, would definitely decrease their revenue.

Water licences may be issued for any or all of the following, which is under the Water Act: agricultural, irrigational, irrigation, commercial, industrial, water power, dewatering, management of fish, management of wildlife, implementing a water conservation objective, habitat enhancement, recreation water management, recreation and any other purposes. We know that that is very important.

Also, like I said, in southern Alberta what, I think, the Minister of Transportation is famous for is saying that water is for fighting. We all know how important that is. Liquor is for drinking, and water is for fighting: that is, I think, what he said to me one time, and that's very true. As we know, we absolutely need access to water, especially in southern Alberta, where we've seen very, very dry times even in our most recent memory.

I'm running out of time. We also need to restore due process to landowners.

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

Are there any members wishing to join debate on this? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this House and speak about something near and dear to my heart, having been a real estate agent for 30 years before being elected to this fine Chamber. I will start my remarks on Bill 206 by noting something that all realtors live by and, of course, all Canadians value very highly, and that is something that's contained in the preamble to the Canadian Real Estate code of ethics, also found, similarly, in the United States National Association of Realtors code of ethics.

4:10

The preamble starts off with a statement and a principle that is widely recognized in law, and it says, Mr. Speaker:

Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization. Through the realtor, the land resource of the nation reaches its highest use and private land ownership its widest distribution.

Of course, as I was mentioning,

the REALTOR is instrumental in moulding the form of his or her community and the living and working conditions of its people.

Fundamental to our economy is the vital need to ensure that property rights are enshrined in legislation. I know that other members have mentioned, Mr. Speaker, how long we have been dealing with the questions that are brought forward, hopefully, to be answered by the private member's bill, Bill 206, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. I'm not certain if indeed that is the case.

Of course, we support the rights of landowners, and we're pleased as Official Opposition members to see the bill come forward to address such things as adverse possession, something of long-standing concern, and of course, as many people will know, it was formerly called or commonly known as squatters' rights. Many families will have knowledge of somebody in their family who lost land because of a squatter. I know that particularly in times of homesteading, when my parents and great-grandparents involved themselves in being homesteaders, you know, filing a claim to a homestead, you potentially had to guard against the loss of that land and property right because of somebody, quote, unquote, squatting on the land and engaging in a claim through being entitled to the land by way of adverse possession, which Bill 206, the private member's bill, seeks to abolish, and rightly so. It is an antiquated piece of law that gives an individual the right to gain title and property simply by occupying it for at least 10 years and showing some evidence of having been on it and using the land.

This will extinguish squatters' rights, or adverse possession, and this has been something that we advocated for as well when we were in government. I know that it's been ongoing for some time, the concerns that have been brought forward. The former government that we had looked at a number of different parts of the adverse possession controversies, and what we hope to settle as far as seeing this private member's bill be successful, if indeed it passes, are certain questions that still remain outstanding. One of them, of course, Mr. Speaker, is: what effect will this bill have on occupiers with a potential claim of adverse possession?

Now, I mentioned in my preamble, Mr. Speaker, that I had sold real estate for 30 years and had been involved in the business. Fairly close to being elected, one of my clients whose property I had listed had an acreage property that had a well drilled on it close to the property line of the boundary of his property but within his property. He and his wife owned it together. They had land title to the property, and there was a well that was drilled on the property, but he didn't drill that well. The neighbour drilled the well, and that well was located on his property, and the outstanding concern that I had as the agent for the seller in that particular case was what indeed might happen if the owner of the adjacent land, who had drilled the well and was using it to supply his property with water, the neighbouring property, had engaged in an exercise to enforce or make a claim of adverse possession for the land that he was using to drill that well on that served his property. Mr. Speaker, I posed the question: what effect would this Bill 206 have on such situations had that individual started a claim for adverse possession? What effect will Bill 206 have? Will it extinguish such claims if they're already in process? If there are already pending claims outstanding right now, what indeed are the provisions for that? I've heard nothing about that, and certainly that is a situation that potentially could end up in the courts if indeed we don't have this piece of legislation speaking to it.

What remedies are available, for example, to this individual landowner who may have, without malice, put the well on his neighbour's land? Indeed, what remedies might be available for that owner to recover costs of having to perhaps redrill a well on his own land, or would there be no remedy whatsoever if he had indeed known full well that he put the well where he did perhaps because he thought the water source was better there? There are questions that this bill does not yet address that I think are important to ensure that we clarify before passage of the legislation. What are the orders to which this applies as far as the pending claims that might be outstanding? We look forward to hearing from the government side answers to this question.

It would have been an interesting exercise – it may still be – for my past client as far as understanding what rights and limitations he may or may not have had if indeed he got into a transaction to sell the land. My advice, of course, was to ensure that the potential buyers were aware of the situation and that the lawyers for both parties were also made aware prior to signing of any contracts. Outstanding issues like this can still be problematic for potential buyers and sellers of land, and I think that the legislation should be something that deals with this as a contingency, which brings to mind some other concerns that I have.

One of them, of course, is the underlying concern that this is a private member's bill rather than a piece of government legislation, given that under all is the land and that property rights are so sacrosanct in this province. All members of this House recognize that and support that. Given the importance of property rights in every facet of our economy and indeed culturally as well, Mr. Speaker, it would have been, I think, important that the government actually saw fit to bring this piece of legislation forward rather than having it brought forward as a private member's bill. It does affect

a number of pieces of legislation, and it probably is more all encompassing than we're even contemplating right now in debate. You know, certainly, it is a major portion of the legislation that eliminates adverse possession, but there are other things that are done by this legislation that the government probably could have more adequately researched and addressed had it been a piece of government legislation.

I know that the legislation amends the Bill of Rights to recognize property rights. It repeals sections of the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. It repeals section 74 and substitutes a section removing right or title through adverse possession under the Land Titles Act. It repeals section 2.1 and amends section 3 of the Limitations Act, and the Responsible Energy Development Act is also changed.

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

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has risen to debate.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to rise in support of a bill which was brought forward by my good friend from Cypress-Medicine Hat, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

4:20

As many members of this House know, I was a former member of our legacy party, the Wildrose Party, and property rights were a hallmark of our former party. They were a hallmark because property rights are arguably the most important rights a citizen can have in creating wealth for themselves, their family, and all of their dependants. Not only wealth but property rights provide a necessary check on governments who wish to adopt overly intrusive ideas of the public good.

Too often we see governments expropriate private lands for some larger projects that supposedly serve the public interest, when, in fact, many projects that the government claims are in the public interest actually create a lot more harm to the public as such projects often contain many unintended consequences. Specifically, this harm concerns the conservation of the natural environment, and shortly I'll explain why the disregard of property rights destroys the natural environment and harms the public at the same time.

Before I do that, I want to take a few minutes to explain why property rights are essential. In particular, there are two integral reasons that highlight the importance of property rights in society. Firstly, property rights ensure uninhibited access to land that is essential for private-sector development and job creation. The private sector needs land to build factories, commercial buildings, residential properties, and other significant, infrastructure-related projects that many of us rely on. Without land these larger developments could not occur and society would not have the vast opportunities available for the citizens to be successful and create prosperity for them and their families.

In fact, according to the International Monetary Fund, which we also call IMF, a significant reason why countries in the Middle East and north Africa have a struggling private sector is because of their inability for private corporations to obtain land. Much of it can be attributed to the restrictive government policies that create numerous issues for establishing land titleship and registration.

Equally – and this is related to my initial point – property rights prevent the arbitrary seizure of private land by the government. Government overreach is something we must always be cognizant of as this inevitably leads to the erosion of personal liberties that are integral to a free, just, and democratic society. It is important to note that such overreach is often discussed and cloaked in notions of a public good. Notions of the public good are what government

regularly use to justify the infringement of individuals' freedom. That cannot be tolerated.

Individual rights and freedoms are not contingent on anything. They are to be upheld forever and always in a democratic nation. Anything less would allow governments to respect rights and freedoms only when convenient for them to do so; in other words, only when doing so aligns with the interest or agenda of the government in power. Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but individual rights and freedoms are not granted because of convenience. They are granted because they are fundamental to the democratic society that values the rule of law. With this bill in place, landowners will have a legal recourse to ensure the land is not used for undesirable purposes, allowing individual landowners to make that determination for themselves rather than governments who frequently adopt perverse notions of actions that are supposedly in the public interest.

Yet these are not the only reasons property rights are important, and with my time remaining, Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the idea of how property rights ensure the preservation of the natural environment. Elizabeth Brubaker is the executive director of Environment Probe, a division of the Energy Probe Research Foundation, one of Canada's leading environmental and public policy research institutes. During her time in that position, Brubaker wrote a book titled *Property Rights in the Defence of Nature*. Brubaker argues that property rights are essential for protecting the natural environment of lands that both landowners and the greater public rely on. The book examines how property rights protect the natural environment while relying on several arguments, but there are two deserving attention.

To begin, entrenching property rights encourages the preservation of public goods. All human beings depend on the service that a healthy environment and ecosystem provides, like clean air, fresh water, healthy vegetation, and many other elements. However, the issue with public goods is that while everyone benefits from these natural resources, there is no actual mechanism to ensure their quality remains high. This unfortunately creates a free-rider problem as no one has to pay for these public goods, which eventually leads to quality diminishment. Yet with property rights this problem can be avoided as it establishes an obligation for either the individual or the community who owns the land to care for it. Not only is there an obligation, but an economic incentive is created as landowners can capture the direct benefits of the land being productive, sustainable, and beneficial for those relying on it.

Property rights also promote investment in conservation practices and efficient use of resources. Environmental conservation is often not achieved at zero cost as we cannot simply rely on the good intentions of our neighbours. That's why creating a market for sustainable natural resource use is prudent, because it gives landowners incentive for using their resources responsibly. For example, in Alberta we have riparian rights, which protect the productive and valuable vegetative lands beside water areas. This is achieved in various ways, but the idea is to assign rights to the water, of which each landowner is allocated a certain amount. Therefore, this leads to farmers adopting water efficient practices to stay within their allotted water amount. Mr. Speaker, with clearly defined property rights, landowners have a significant incentive to adopt sustainable resource management practices that benefit both the landowners and others requesting its services.

Clearly defined property rights ensure the protection and conservation of land by providing tangible incentives to do so. Society may not be charged for using the natural environment, but the costs of harming the environment are felt by everyone. While governments can regulate resource use and punish overuse, this sort of arrangement can be costly, time consuming, and difficult to

enforce. Strengthening property rights is an efficient and effective way to benefit people, land, and natural resources.

I'm very proud to support this bill and want to again applaud my good friend from Cypress-Medicine Hat for tabling this crucial piece of legislation. I'm happy to support this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Are there any members looking to join debate on this? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to Bill 206, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. Of course, as was previously indicated by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, we're very happy to speak to this particular bill. I mean, while we were in government and I had the opportunity to chair the Resource Stewardship Committee, we know that this was a matter in front of us quite a few times. That being said, I also want to applaud the work of a previous member of the House, Mr. Pat Stier. I know that this issue was near and dear to his heart. He was very passionate about this particular issue. I remember him speaking to me even personally on the matter. I'm glad that we have this bill in front of us because, of course, as we all do – I'm sure that everybody in this House agrees – we want to support the landowners on this particular matter.

What I find, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that significant time passes when, for example, the property line between two neighbours gets confused. It could be generations and generations and generations that have passed, and there's not quite an assurance on exactly where that property line rests. Of course, now, we don't imagine that any of the parties involved have any malintent. What ends up happening often is the fact that one family, for example, ends up working a particular piece of land for such a long time, for generations, and then they begin to think: "Well, this is our piece of land. We've worked this for so long. It's been in our family for generations. There's been no dispute."

4:30

Of course, what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that when the land title then transfers or somebody else buys that property, all of a sudden when they see the property report, they realize: "Oh, my goodness. There's this piece of property which, you know, is being disputed." Thus, we enter into these kinds of situations where, when land titles then transfer to a new family, they begin to realize that there's a piece, perhaps even a small plot of land, that's under dispute. As the Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about – the well that he was talking about is a perfect example of that. This is the matter that we have before us, so I'm glad that this particular bill addresses adverse possession.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

To my understanding, the bill does three main things, and that is that it introduces property rights into the Bill of Rights, it gives access to damages for loss of property – damages are monies ordered by the court to be paid by someone; it's a remedy for loss of property – and then, of course, it removes adverse possession from property law in Alberta. These are the matters of concern for, as I said, many landowners, specifically rural landowners, as I'm sure that you acknowledge, based on these large quantities of land. Like I was saying, rather than it being, like, an exception, you know, a once-in-a-blue-moon kind of thing, unfortunately this happens way too many times here in the province of Alberta based on the fact that, as I was saying, generations and generations pass and then it's not really well known where those property limits actually

stand. Of course, as we continue to move forward on this particular bill, I think it's something that's really important for us to discuss.

Of course, there are a few questions that we have for the members on the other side that support the bill. A few of those questions: I'm just going to go through them if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker. What effect will this bill have on occupiers with a potential claim of adverse possession? If some of the members on that side who are in support of the bill could actually address this particular issue, I think that that would go a long way to help us further understand and get to a conclusion on this particular bill.

Also, I want to ask: what effect will this bill have on pending claims of adverse possession? As I said, this is something that goes back historically in this province for a long time. There are a lot of these situations that are currently perhaps under dispute, and it affects quite a few people.

The other question that I have is: well, what remedies will be available for an occupier who has made improvements to that property? As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, what ends up happening a lot of the time is that the person who's actually working that particular piece of land is under the understanding that it's their piece of land, you know, so they treat it as if it were their piece of land. In a lot of cases in rural communities they work that piece of land and then can even do a number of improvements. The question then becomes: okay; well, what happens in these particular scenarios?

A further question is: well, what are the orders to which this applies, and then what problems do these solve?

These are the questions that we have for members on the other side. If they could take the time to address some of these questions, I think that that would go a long way to help out with us understanding specifically how we can continue to support the bill. Of course, I don't at this particular moment foresee us introducing any kinds of amendments on it. It's more about just being able to understand what would happen in these particular scenarios and being able to address the matters that we have before us.

As I stated, Mr. Speaker, these issues have a history here in the province of Alberta. It's been happening for quite some time where these pieces of land are under dispute, of course. Unfortunately, these matters arise, but like I mentioned before, it's usually when – and perhaps there was, like, a considerable amount of understanding between neighbours in the past, right?

One of the particular cases that comes to mind is Reeder versus Woodward, where the Reeder family had owned land in Cardston, Alberta, for several generations. In 1972 the county upgraded highway 501 running just south of the property boundary line between William Reeder's farmland and neighbour Dennis Vадnais's land. The construction created a remnant that separated 9.5 acres of Vадnais's land next to the Reeder property, and the Vадnais's own strip was now divided by the newly built highway and surrounded by a fence. Although the land did not belong to them, the Reeder family improved the parcel of land and regularly grew hay and pastured cattle on it.

The Vадnais family actually knew about this, and they didn't seem to have an issue with it. There was no dispute, you know, and for a long time there was no issue with this particular matter. Both families knew about it. They never discussed the issue because, as I was stating, there just didn't seem to be a problem. Both families knew about it. Like I said, it was never discussed. However, the disputed strip of land today is worth about \$30,000, but of course in 1999 Robert and Lorraine Woodward purchased all of the Vадnais's land, and then these 9.5 acres actually then came into dispute.

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

Any other hon. members looking to debate Bill 206? I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I'd like to speak in favour of Bill 206. I guess I want to say thanks to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for bringing this forward. Then, of course, also he's passed it on to the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, so thanks to her for being able to continue this important bill along.

I think that when we look back in history – and we could probably go back farther than there is actually any written history or knowledge of history – we could infer that societies formed over time to protect life and property. I think we realize that property rights, the idea of property rights, is something that's been important for generations and generations.

Of course, it's a very important part of society today. When we look at the ownership of property in our society today – owning your own house, owning a farm, owning a recreational property or something like that – I think there's a certain amount of pride and enjoyment. Obviously, owning property is something you do voluntarily. You choose a chunk of property. You purchase it, and then you purchase it for your enjoyment, to use it. Having the right to enjoy that as you please I think is a basic tenet of our society.

4:40

We look at things like the law of adverse possession, squatters' rights, and we look at how, you know, in the past, I guess, at one point in time it seemed like it was okay, but I think that if we look at it now, it's hard to conceive that we could be in a society here today where somebody could use a portion of your property for 10 years or more for no compensation and then all of a sudden they would have some right to actually possess that chunk of property of yours. I think that when you put it as simply as that, it's hard to imagine that that's actually even in place today, but it actually is, so I think that doing away with this adverse possession, the squatters' rights, portion in the property rights statutes is very important.

Another thing I think is important to realize is that we have situations now where, through no fault of your own, you could own a piece of property – in fact, I'll just give an example. I have some constituents who bought a piece of property. They bought it to build a retirement home on. They were younger when they bought it. They bought this property, and they could go out to this property. They could do some improvements and everything. Their end goal was to build a home there and retire. Well, all of a sudden along the way regulations changed so that they actually cannot build a home on that property. Through no fault of their own they have a chunk of property that they invested in, that they bought under the full understanding – and it was totally legal at the time – that they could build a home on that property. Well, now due to regulation changes they can't do what they purchased the land for. Of course, not only does that change their plans for their future, but it also devalues the property that they have. Now instead of having a chunk of property that they could build a home on or sell to somebody else to build a home on, nobody could build anything on it, so the property value has dropped substantially. Now the only thing somebody could do is maybe camp on it or something like that.

Obviously, there are situations like that where we have people in our society that have in good faith purchased property to do what they were legally allowed to do, and then it has changed. Through no fault of their own they're in a situation where there is a drastic change in value to their property. I think we need to consider things like that as we look at property rights in Alberta.

Now, of course, property rights were a platform commitment of the UCP. We campaigned on it. We were very clear with Albertans that we were going to change some of these things in property rights, and Bill 206 represents quite a few of those commitments that we made to Albertans during the campaign. We know that property rights have been a real hot topic in politics here in Alberta for quite some time. We look back to the Wildrose Party. A lot of its base and a lot of its strength came from defending property rights within Alberta.

Now, of course, there's always this fine line between property rights and then having the right of government to be able to do major infrastructure projects that are for the good of society. Of course, when we have those two competing interests, we have to have a way to protect both the landowner, the property owner, and also the government or, basically, society and to be able to balance those two. Of course, we have to have a way, through the courts, to be able to sort out issues when those two competing interests come into conflict.

Now, of course, property rights are fundamental in ensuring the creation and protection of wealth and the protection of freedom. If we look at, you know, for instance, a farmer who owns his or her land in order to generate revenue – they farm that land, and many have done it for many generations – they need to be able to have that security that that property can be used for that as long as they need to do that or would like to do that, and then, of course, they want to be able to have that opportunity to pass it on to the next generation or sell it to somebody else to be able to do the same thing. That's why I think that when we talk about property rights, we have to talk about that protection of wealth and the protection of the right to make a living off that said property.

Now, of course, we know that when people buy property, they – for instance, a business owner could buy property to build a business on and create wealth that way, too, not just with agriculture but other businesses, too. We have to be able to protect that foundation, that entrepreneurs have when they take that risk to buy property to develop their business, that they will be able to have that opportunity to continue on and to create that wealth for themselves and others.

You know, when we look at property rights, I know we look a lot at rural Albertans, and I think that rural Albertans will probably find the most benefit from property rights. I think that makes sense because of the size of the property and everything, and I think that's important to consider. But we also know that property rights extend not only to rural Albertans but, of course, people in the urban centres as well. They need to be able to have certainty that the property that they've purchased, that they have title to is theirs and that they have protection against outside influences on that property.

When the Crown rescinds a statutory consent that may lead to financial losses to the holder of that property, then the property owner needs to be able to bring a claim forward to cover those losses. That's part of that process, you know, where landowners need an opportunity to go through the courts to be able to recover any financial losses that may come as a result of the government rescinding a statutory consent. We need, of course, proper due process if the government plans to expropriate land or does expropriate land and to be able to prevent that expropriation happening without due justice in the end as far as landowners being able to protect themselves against those losses. Of course, this bill also takes into consideration the energy regulator as far as the public applications to expropriate land.

Mr. Speaker, I think that when we look at Bill 206, we have a lot of things in there that are protecting property rights. Like, property rights are incredibly important to Albertans and, again like I said,

not just rural Albertans but, of course, all Albertans. You know, we can't have situations happen where the government freezes the ability of property owners to develop their property as they see fit, and if they do, then there has to be a way to compensate that change of use of that land.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'll close with that. Again, when we look at property rights, we have to look at the entirety of it. We need to know that within our society property rights are important. They're something that – we as individuals have to respect, of course, the property rights of others, but of course we have to have the government and others respect our property rights also. With that, I'll close and just recommend that everybody here support Bill 206 as it goes forward.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm looking for other members to join in the debate. I see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to stand here today and offer my support for Bill 206, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, as brought forward by my colleague from Brooks-Medicine Hat.

"Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others [and] no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property." Mr. Speaker, this is according to the universal declaration of human rights, signed by Canada in 1948, a time when our world was recovering from one of its lowest points. The fact that in this moment of our history our ancestors not only thought about but prioritized ownership of property is a true testament to the fundamental nature of property rights. However, much like today, the decision to count property ownership as a human right was controversial and disputed among some countries and individuals. The suspicions about private property as a fundamental human right undermine the coherence of human rights as a guiding principle and political concept and of fundamental freedoms and prosperity.

Applying that short history lesson to this bill helps us understand the principles behind it. Owning property is not just a responsibility for individuals; it is their fundamental right. In my riding of Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock property rights matter all the more as many farmers and ranching families have built their livelihoods on caring for and managing their property – and these farms and ranches have been passed down through the generations – all working as good stewards of the land.

4:50

This bill is important for my constituency but also important for all of Alberta's agriculture and irrigation sectors as it directly addresses the issues that land expropriation has on water licensing. Currently Alberta's agricultural sector contributes \$9.2 billion in GDP and employs 77,000 Albertans. Ensuring that this industry is able to adequately maintain and manage their land and assets not only helps these families and small businesses, but it helps our province. When these families are assured that their property investments will be protected, they are able to continue on and enjoy the ability to provide for their families and sustain their communities. The right to own property and maintain that property is a fundamental freedom that all Albertans share and benefit from.

Consequential legislation such as Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, removed some property rights. In the early 2000s Bill 36 was implemented to make major infrastructure projects easier to complete. While it is important to get such projects done in a quick and efficient manner, laws for ensuring judicial review and fair compensation to protect property owners must exist. In

2015 even Brian Mason from the NDP talked about the problems with Bill 36 and how it impacted property ownership in our province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Bill 206 will remove two very burdensome parts of Bill 36. Bill 206 will allow landowners the opportunity to appeal the expropriation of a title to the courts, and it will allow them to receive full and fair compensation. It may be strange to think that these things were ever challenged in our democracy, but they were, and it is now our job to fix them. One example of the current regulations is the ability for the government to expropriate land needed for projects such as highway development. While this infrastructure is vital, it should not come at a cost to the individual farmer who will lose the valuable space for growing crops and grazing land. Under Bill 206 farmers and ranchers would be entitled to full, fair, and timely compensation so they can purchase land and/or move their operation elsewhere to make up for the land that was expropriated. In more formal terms Bill 206 will restore due process to landowners for the land that the government expropriates. It will provide recourse to the courts to determine compensation payable if necessary.

In 2015 and in 2019 I campaigned on the idea of restoring property rights and repealing laws such as the Land Stewardship Act that take away or infringe upon individual property rights. Bill 206 will restore confidence to Albertans that their property rights will be protected. To paraphrase my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat, Alberta has had trouble attracting investment the past few years. This bill sends a positive signal to Canadian investors and investors around the world that we believe in giving everybody equal opportunity to create wealth, create jobs, and have fair playing rules.

Mr. Speaker, property rights are fundamental to ensuring not only the protection of wealth but also in the creation of wealth. Our government continues to pave the way for a stronger and more stable investment climate here in Alberta. Bill 206 will strengthen property rights for all Albertans, thus leading to continued investment in our province. Rural Albertans stand to gain the most from this bill as it creates more government accountability for infrastructure projects that involve expropriating farmland, grazing land, or even bodies of water. By ensuring fair compensation for land expropriation, we are standing with Albertans and not against their property rights. Just like Canada said back in 1948, Alberta believes in the universal right to own property and to manage and maintain that property to the best of one's abilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to speak to Bill 206. I fully endorse the intent of the bill and will be supporting this bill as we move forward.

Thank you.

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

I see the hon. Member for Peace River has risen.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the previous member for his comments and appreciate the input that he's had on this important topic of property rights, and I want to thank the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for moving this piece of legislation and bringing it forward.

In a free society property rights are the foundation of our freedoms. They truly are, Mr. Speaker. This is something that has been universally endorsed across western civilization, that without the right to own property, our freedoms will be disintegrated. This is effectively the rights that we have here in Alberta because of the work that we have done in our civilization going all the way back

to even before Runnymede in 1205, talking about the importance and the rights that citizens have, being ruled by the Crown. This might sound lofty, but the truth is that without property rights, all that we have today in our society, the freedoms we enjoy, the economic prosperity Alberta has benefited from more than almost any developed country in the world, would be gone.

The truth is that the ability that I have to own property myself, that every citizen equal under the law has to own property and to be protected by the rule of law is foundational to the ability for me to be able to have freedom of movement, freedom of economy, freedom to live my life as I see fit because I rest in the certain knowledge, protected by law, that the property that I have will not be expropriated unfairly, unjustly, unreasonably.

The truth is that if we look at societies that do not protect property rights – and I think it's appropriate to bring this up now, especially in second reading as we're talking about the principles of the bill – we shudder. We look at them, and we say: that is not somewhere I would like to move to. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that the emigration numbers out of the republic of Congo to Canada are one direction and not the other for a very certain reason, and part of that is the ability for these newcomers who come to Canada to know that the work that they invest in, the property they own, the businesses they set up are protected and that you cannot expropriate and take by fiat what you like and will as a government.

We ourselves are bound by certain rules and procedures, by the rule of law itself, and this goes back to Charles II, the idea of whether or not the Crown has limitations in its authority. The truth is that this Legislature has advocated in its previous incarnations, going all the way back to the Parliament in the United Kingdom, that there are limitations to the Crown. The truth is that without that, we live in what would be an absolute dictatorship, and property rights have a part to play in allowing that freedom to flourish.

[The Speaker in the chair]

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we bring this up now, the importance that property rights play in our foundation as a society. We look at the way that – whether we're talking about detailed cases currently, when a government decides to build and expand its infrastructure, the way that the state interacts with private citizens needs to be something that is protected by law, needs to make sure that it is something that we know as citizens in advance predictably will be followed. Where there is uncertainty in how that interaction works, we'll find ourselves in a spot where that predictability and thus the rule of law are breaking down.

I think that fundamentally plays to our ability to be free, to have free enterprise in this society because if we do not have certainty in that, even if it's just on the fringes, we'll find ourselves in a difficult position as individuals working to try and expand our economic growth in the province. The truth is that knowing that when you get to advance into the situation, this will remain predictable is key. Now, the vast majority of this interaction is settled by common law. The vast majority of this is codified in our province and in our state nationally. But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that there are certain fringes where it is not clear, where there is a lack of clarity in terms of what rights individuals have, and that is what this bill endeavours to try and solve.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but unfortunately the time for consideration of this matter this afternoon has concluded.

#### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

### Support for Schools

513. Ms Hoffman moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider (a) restoring per-student provincial funding in the Ministry of Education budget in line with levels during the 2018-2019 fiscal year, and (b) providing additional support to school boards to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Alberta's students.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues. I rise in this place with excitement. This is my first private member's motion. I'm glad to be able to have an opportunity to bring it forward. I think today it's fitting that we talk about this for a few reasons. Number one, over the last five days we've continued to see huge numbers of COVID virus infections in our province, and the number of fatalities has continued to grow as well. I think, doing some rough math, looking back at the last few days, it's been about five days since the number has doubled. If it continues at that same rate – and typically things, once they start doubling, move even faster than the time it takes between – I think that we will all be in for a very tough Christmas, to say it lightly.

There are sort of three things that internationally are seen as being successful in helping to slow the spread: wearing a mask, washing your hands, and spreading out and/or staying away from one another. Definitely, washing your hands and wearing a mask: I want to say that a lot of school divisions have done a lot to make sure that that is their policy, at least for grade 4 onward. I want to recognize the little bit of money that was allocated towards that cause. From all accounts I've heard, the supplies that have been provided have been depleted already in schools, and they're on to try to find ways to fund that on their own at this point. I think that this isn't something that we should be scrimping on, the amount of hand sanitizer we're giving to schools to try to help students sanitize.

We've also heard members in this place say that students are spending too much time sanitizing their hands or washing their hands, that it's not necessary. Other members say that too many students have been sent into isolation, that it's not necessary. Well, it is necessary that a hundred students, in the example that was raised by the Member for Red Deer-South, are sent into isolation – it was over a hundred – because that's how many close contacts a student had in the school. If we actually acted in this place to ensure that we did not just mask wearing and sanitization but also the piece around ensuring proper distancing and capping class sizes – we've proposed 15. I'd be happy to hear what the government's counter-proposal is. So far it's just been: we're not going to do that.

It would be great to actually see some concrete measures to actually slow the spread in school because it is growing incredibly quickly in schools and in society. We still have contact tracing failing to identify the source case now of over 80 per cent of infections in this province. So it's really frustrating for many students who are living this, who are walking the halls of their school themselves. It's very scary for many staff members, who are there because they love learning and they love students and they want to support them, but they also want to be able to ensure that they're going home safely to their families at the end of the day, both students and staff and to our broader communities.

In terms of the first part, where we talk about the education funding piece, I want to sort of break it down a little bit because in this place a lot of things have been said by the Premier that are not reflective of the facts. The facts are that in 2018-19, which is the year I referenced in my motion, we had 730,375 students and we had an \$8.22 billion budget, which worked out to \$11,257 per student. Now, in 2020-2021: 756,638 students, the same overall

budget. So when you divide that up, it works out to \$10,824. That's a cut of \$433 per student from our schools. When people say, you know, that we've maintained that per pupil, that's not true. The per-pupil amount has been cut by \$433.

The other piece I want to make sure that everyone is aware of – and the Premier has said this more than once. He stands in this place and says: you know, we fund education at the highest rates across Canada. That's not even close to being reflective of the facts. The truth is – and the MacKinnon report highlights this. It's on page 146 of the KPMG support that was given to the MacKinnon report, the tables that are included there. In 2018-19 B.C. funded education – B.C. did fund at less than Alberta – at \$9,681; Alberta was at \$11,121; Quebec was more at \$12,325; and Ontario was even more than that at \$17,077. Why is it that we keep getting torqued talking points that don't reflect the reality? I can tell you that the talking points and waving around the global number doesn't actually put teachers in classrooms. It doesn't put educational assistants in classrooms.

How did this government respond at the very beginning of the pandemic? They responded by taking that \$8.22 billion, which we had just passed one or two weeks before, and decided that they were going to lay off more than 20,000 educational workers throughout this province, mostly women and many of them lower income employed positions, so educational assistants, lunchroom folks who were helping to feed students, bus drivers, and the list goes on. That resulted in a further reduction to the budget for education of \$128 million. I'm sure when we get the fiscal update – I believe it's tomorrow – we'll be able to see that number or even a bigger number reflected as a reduction over budget compared to actuals or projections for this upcoming year. It's projections at this point, not an actual. But there was an intentional decision to continue using the talking point of \$8.22 billion but to actually cut it and not reflect that cut in the language that was used in this place.

Number one, per-pupil funding has gone down more than \$400. Number two, when you are told that the funding is the highest in the country, that's not even close to true. There is about a \$6,000 difference between Ontario and Alberta, Ontario being at \$17,077 and Alberta being at \$11,121. Some of that might be because Ontario has done things like full-day kindergarten, which I think that we should be aspiring for here in the province. Right now in very few places can you receive full-day kindergarten. If you do, it's often alternating days, so one day on, one day off. In others it's typically either crowdsourced from the community to raise the funds to offset the provincial budget or certain schools have it and other schools lose some of their other funding. The research shows that full-day kindergarten makes a huge difference.

Of course, the other piece that this motion refers to are the realities of COVID. We all know. I'm sure that you've gotten the calls. I've gotten the calls and the e-mails from parents who say: I'm worried about class sizes. For example, a lot of parents in Edmonton are in a quarterly system, where every quarter they get to determine whether or not their child will continue to learn in person or online or vice versa, depending on what they chose for the first quarter. Many parents reached out to me, saying, "You know, 22 students for Q1 wasn't terrible, so when I re-enrolled for my child to learn in person for Q2, I expected it to be about the same," but in a number of circumstances it's gone up. While the government says that they don't have the funds to reduce the proportion of teachers, the class sizes, number one, I don't buy that because I hear all the time from qualified, certified teachers in our province who are looking for work, and I imagine you do, too.

We stood with some just last week who are new graduates, but there are also many who have teaching certificates and live in our communities and are willing to step up and be part of the solution,

especially given the types of unemployment, record unemployment, that we're seeing here in this province under the current leadership of this province, over 12 per cent here, for example, in the capital city. When we have many people who are either willing to be educational assistants or other types of school employees as well as teachers willing to step up and be part of the solution, rather than continuing to ignore the needs of students, creating opportunities for these adults to be productively employed in supporting student learning, whether it's in person or online – that's the solution, not continuing to recite talking points that have been proven over and over again to not reflect the facts, to not represent the truth, and to continue to pretend that everything is fine.

Let me be very frank. It's not fine. People are watching these numbers grow and grow and grow, and for the more than 60 people – I think it's 62 people today – who are in ICU, I am very concerned for them. I'm very concerned for the staff who are working with them. We know that staff in ICUs are doubling up on their patient loads right now. Typically you have one ICU-registered nurse for one ICU patient, and it's changed recently, about a week ago. Now the model is one ICU nurse for two patients, and then they get somebody else to support them.

5:10

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. the Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am rising today to speak to the negative impact that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's motion would have on the education system. I'll start the time off by discussing the flaws behind the first part of her motion, in which she urges the government to return to the 2018-2019 funding levels, and finish off by highlighting the significant investment Alberta taxpayers have made in COVID-19 related funding for schools. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora's push to return to 2018-19 funding levels would not improve or increase funding for the majority of our school boards. In fact, it would reduce the funding available to many school boards in this province. To explain this flaw in her motion, I just wanted to give the House a brief overview of the new K to 12 funding model implemented as part of Budget 2020.

When the government developed our new funding model, they met with every single school authority and met with key groups within the broader education system. The model rolled out was a direct result of those conversations. Simply put, the new funding model is a better way of doing things. It provides the predictability and sustainability that school authorities have long called for. It reduces red tape, it gives school boards more flexibility and autonomy, and most importantly it drives dollars and more dollars to the classroom. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a result of this new funding model, every single school authority in the province saw an increase in the overall education funding for this school year, roughly a \$120 million increase across the province.

Now that I've covered the change that our model has brought to the system, I want to highlight specifically how the first part of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's motion would actually harm the education system. To do that, I thought I would compare the overall funding for school divisions across the province and demonstrate how under our model the vast majority of school authorities are actually receiving more per student in the 2021 school year than they did in the 2018-2019 school year. Mr. Speaker, here's the overall funding divided per student for the following school boards in the 2018-19 and the '20-21 school years.

The Aspen View school division: in 2018-2019 they received \$14,188 per full-time entry student in operational funding. In 2020-



21 they are receiving \$14,903 per FTE student in operational funding. That's an increase of almost \$800 per student.

The Clearview school division: in 2018-2019 they received \$12,485 per FTE student in operational funding, and now in this year, 2020-2021, they are receiving \$13,004 per FTE student. That's an increase of almost \$500 per student.

The Elk Island Catholic separate school division: in 2018-2019 they received \$10,498 per FTE student in operational funding, and in the 2020-2021 year they are receiving \$10,999 per FTE student, an increase, again, of almost \$500 per student.

The East Central francophone education regional authority: in 2018-2019 they received \$17,888 per FTE student, and this year they are receiving \$17,964 per FTE student in operational funding.

The Peace Wapiti school division: in 2018-2019 they received \$12,563 per FTE student in operational funding, and this year they are receiving \$13,052 per FTE student.

For my constituents the Lethbridge school division for 2018-2019 received \$10,194 per FTE student in funding, and this year, 2020-2021, they are receiving \$10,210 per FTE student in operational funding.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on listing these examples, but I believe I have made my point. These six school divisions are just six of many school divisions who are better off under the new funding model and have more operational funding per student in the 2020-2021 school year than they did in the 2018-2019 school year. Simply put, these six school divisions, plus many more I have not listed, would be worse off under the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's proposed motion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is a former trustee, and I know and she knows that the members opposite had a difficult time working with school divisions, which might be one of the reasons why they oppose the new funding model. After all, it was built after significant consultation with our education system and had broad support from school authority leadership.

To remind the House of this support, I'd like to read a couple of quotes into the record. I quote: the new funding framework reflects a return to an increased autonomy for local board decision-making coupled with a reduction in the red tape that school authorities have been challenged with in recent years. That's Bevan Daverne, president of the College of Alberta School Superintendents.

The next quote: the reduction of red tape afforded by the new model will help reduce the complexity and workload involved in providing extensive and repetitious data which in turn will allow our teachers to focus on what is most important, our students. That's Mary Martin of the board of Calgary Catholic. The simple reality is this, Mr. Speaker. This motion before the House would cut funding to many school authorities across the province.

On to COVID-19. The members opposite like to claim that schools have simply not been given any support. That is not the case. Now, I'm not sure if the members opposite haven't heard the Minister of Education during question period or missed a few news releases, but for their sake I'd like to reiterate the significant investment Alberta taxpayers have made to support schools during COVID-19. To date Alberta taxpayers have funded \$10 million in PPE, including two reusable masks for every single staff and student, face shields for staff, sanitizer for schools, and touchless thermometers for schools as well; \$250 million in accelerated capital maintenance and renewal funding as a part of Alberta's recovery plan, which many school authorities directed to improve their schools for COVID-19, including for HVAC and ventilation upgrades and touchless sinks; access to taxpayer-funded reserves, of which there are \$363 million available across the province. All of this was on top of a \$120 million increase in operational funding for the 2020-2021 school year.

In total, Mr. Speaker, Alberta taxpayers have funded \$743 million in increased funding for school authorities to ensure that they have a safe learning environment during COVID-19. This, coupled with the \$262 million in taxpayer funding that the federal government provided, has given school authorities access to over \$1 billion in taxpayer funding, three-quarters of which came from the Alberta government. The minister, the Premier, and many of my colleagues have said numerous times that we remain committed to ensuring that school authorities have the funds they need to ensure a safe school year for our staff and students.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's motion would have significant implications on our school authorities if the government were to implement it. It would significantly cut operational funding on a per-student level to many school authorities in the province. Additionally, as I have clearly indicated, we have provided school authorities with resources to ensure a safe learning environment during COVID-19, and we will continue to ensure that they have the resources that they need. As such, I would encourage the House to vote down this motion. The funding implication would have many school authorities in the province under harm and would harm the quality of education that students receive from school authorities in Sherwood Park, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Wetaskiwin, Red Deer, Conklin, Lethbridge, and more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this excellent motion by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. I particularly am happy to be standing up to speak after the Member for Lethbridge-East spoke because I want all the listeners to know that the information that they've just heard is inaccurate and intended to cause confusion and does not reflect the assessment of anyone other than the UCP government.

In fact, when I was teaching statistics at the university, we used to refer to this as fudging the data, which is presenting information without providing all of the information such that the outcome that you intend to come out of your data analysis is supported by your data rather than going to the data first and looking at what the implications and outcomes are. It's kind of putting the cart before the horse, as they say, with the intention of misleading people as to the veracity of the data.

5:20

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, but it sounded a lot like the implication was that the hon. member intentionally misled the Assembly. Of course, we know that he wouldn't have done that because that would be unparliamentary, just as it is to imply that he was misleading the Assembly. It's possible that I misheard, but it certainly sounded a lot like that, so I encourage the member to refrain from doing so in the future, if that is what happened, and stick to the contents of the motion.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be cautious as to how I describe the truthfulness of the situation here so that I don't compromise the rules of the House. It doesn't change the truthfulness of my statements, however.

The thing I think is very important here is that the government, in their presentations in general to the public, has devised a way of speaking to the public which would cause the public to believe that there are increases in monies going to school boards when, in fact, the school boards themselves, the very people who have to put

together a budget and deliver it, have all told us that their monies are going down. They have repeatedly told us that.

One of the little tricks that's used by the UCP is they refer to a single line item in their budget indicating that under the previous government \$8.2 billion was being given to the school boards and that that \$8.2 billion is maintained in the current budget; therefore, they must be giving the same amount of money. Then, of course, they add monies they've been giving for COVID and say: now we're giving more money. But let's break that down a little bit.

First of all, this one line item in the budget is not the only way that a school board receives money from the provincial government. It is only one of four ways that previously they received money from the provincial government. What this member and the UCP in general are neglecting to tell you is that while they have maintained one line item to be identical in spite of some problems with that, which I'll speak to in a moment, they're not telling you that they have also gotten rid of the other three of four ways in which schools receive funding. They neglect to tell you that they eliminated the class size funding grant. They neglect to tell you that they've eliminated the class improvement grant. They neglect to tell you that they have eliminated the school fee reduction grant.

In reality when you look at the consolidated budget of the school boards, the amount of money that they're receiving has been decreased. In fact, the report from CBC indicated that these amounts of monies are less this year compared to previous years: Edmonton public schools, minus \$691 per student; Edmonton Catholic schools, minus \$152 per student; Calgary board of education, minus \$701 per student; Calgary Catholic schools, minus \$341 per student; Black Gold school division, Leduc, minus \$812 per student; Rocky View schools, Airdrie, minus \$673 per student, just to give you some examples.

I'm sure that the member across can point out places where a single line item has indeed gone up for a single school board, but the reality is that, overall, schools across this province have significantly less money. I've already identified that it's because three of the four sources of funding from the provincial government have been eliminated by this government. That was a failure of that member and of the government in general to acknowledge when talking about the consolidated, that is the full budget of the school boards.

Let's go back to that \$8.2 billion – that is indeed the same from the previous year as it is in this current budget – and look at that. Now, that particular amount of money was set when the number of students in schools was at a particular level. But what they neglect to tell you is that because we are a very young and growing province, we often have a significant increase, including up to 15,000 new students a year entering into school boards across the province of Alberta, so if you maintain the \$8.2 billion, as they say that they have – and I guess I'll acknowledge that they have on that one particular line item – you are actually decreasing the per-student funding just by its very nature. That's simple arithmetic. Describing the process that has been gone through as one in which there is increased flexibility or more money to the classrooms overall is simply a talking point. The reality is that the school boards – the assessments being done by objective third-party groups have all been that there is a significant decrease in dollars going to the schools.

I would be asking this government to support this motion because we need to get back into a place where children matter, where we do not want them going into school systems where they are not receiving all that we as a province can provide them. Truly, it is said over and over again by many people that children are our future. We have a responsibility because one day we will be referred to as

those children's ancestors, and the question will be: did our ancestors do the right things to ensure our well-being in this world? I think that that's something that we should take to heart and that we should live by on a regular basis. We need to be the ancestors that our descendants will need.

The second part of this particular motion supports the idea of providing consistent, ongoing support for COVID. Now, I understand that the member has said that they did indeed send some cans of handwash and some other PPE to the schools. We appreciate that, so let me say thank you for your minimalist attempt to help kids in school. That will get my minimalist praise as well. What they did not do was implement the largest and most significant suggestions that were given to them.

Now, because we know that this government has had a hard time coming up with complex, comprehensive legislation in almost every area, as usual the NDP have put together a comprehensive plan. That comprehensive plan has been available since before the school year started this year and included 15 different aspects. I noticed that almost none of those things have been done by this government at all to protect children as they head back into the school system during this difficult time of COVID, so I'd like to suggest that government go to [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca), a wonderful website that has real plans for the province of Alberta that have been put together by, clearly, the government in waiting, that will be replacing this government in due time, where they can read the 15-point plan on how to ensure safety for children in the schools along with many other plans to help Albertans do better. [Albertasfuture.ca](http://Albertasfuture.ca): join us there.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the speech from the hon. member from the opposition, but it reminds me of my first rodeo, with a point here and a point here and a lot of bull in between. The truth is that there was not – oh, I could rephrase for the member opposite, given his noble heritage. I'd say that it was malarkey, and I'm going to do my best to try and correct the record.

Before I get to the detailed facts, I think it's important to frame this properly and give some context. The opposition, with this motion, is trying to paint a picture where Conservatives don't care about education. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We as United Conservatives care deeply about our education. I myself am a product of the public education system here in Alberta. For better or for worse the way I'm informed, the way I was educated, and the way that I express myself in the Chamber are products of this education system. My wife is a teacher in the public education system of Alberta, my parents are teachers in the public education system of Alberta, and my brother is a teacher in the public education system of Alberta. These are important things to remember. Ultimately, the truth is that what the opposition is doing here with the motion from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is cynical politics. It is not reflective of the important truth of how we care about public education and that we continue to support it in the province of Alberta.

5:30

My mother graduated from the University of Alberta with her education degree and moved to Peace River. That will come as no surprise to members of this Chamber – they hear often how much I love my constituency – but my history in Peace River, before I began to exist, started through public education. My mother came to Peace River, and she taught in the Catholic system there. Eventually she met my father there while he was living and working in Berwyn, running a small motel with my grandfather. The truth is

that that school division continues to exist today. It's Holy Family, Mr. Speaker, and it's an incredibly important school division. Holy Family school division is one that I have relatives teaching in today. I know they care deeply for their students.

This is going to surprise members opposite, but what the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is suggesting is that we pay those teachers less, well, that we will effectively fund those students less. In the suggestion that if we follow through and vote for the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's motion that we're debating today, the truth is that Holy Family school division would receive near a thousand dollars less per student – a thousand dollars less. Now, contrary to what the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was trying to imply, that is a holistic, comprehensive total. There's not some pocket left out. Those are all the grants and funds rolled into one. The truth is that that school division would suffer under this. But that's not where it ends, Mr. Speaker. We continue on.

Fort Vermilion school division in 2018-19 got \$15,223 per full-time student; they now get \$17,964. That's over a \$2,000 difference, Mr. Speaker, two thousand dollars per student. I have to ask the member opposite quite sincerely: why do you not want my schools to be funded like your urban schools? Is this an antirural policy? What is going on? I'm very concerned, and I'm concerned because it smacks of cynical political games rather than caring for the students and the teachers. Our education system is precious and attempting to defund the rural areas disproportionately is not something I can stand for, because I represent my constituents. That's what I'm here to do first and foremost.

We can look at the Peace River school division, which in 2018-19 went from \$15,000 for full-time students to now \$16,968, near \$2,000, Mr. Speaker. I know that division is appreciative of having those funds now. It is something that's important for how they educate their kids.

Northlands school division, across a massive geographic area, largely educating First Nations and Métis students: they saw an \$800 increase and would go backwards \$800 per student if this motion was taken seriously.

**An Hon. Member:** That's not true.

**Mr. Williams:** You really have to ask the question.

I hear the member opposite heckling and saying, "That's not true." Well, I'm looking right at the numbers. The truth is that it would be a decrease, and I don't want that for the students that live and work in my constituency. I don't want that for the families who care about the education of their children. I think it's too important, especially when we talk about those who are primarily First Nation and Métis.

Isn't this interesting, Mr. Speaker? It seems like the opposite of everything they're trying to say. They're trying to say that they care about the students. Well, not in my riding they don't. They're trying to say that they care about public education. Not with this motion they don't. It seems to be categorically the opposite.

I can talk to you about the Fort Vermilion school division for a moment, Mr. Speaker. It has an area of one of the most remote, rural parts of our province. We have somewhere around half the students who in normal years are not educated in the public system, the Catholic or the public. They're getting educated at home, and they're getting educated through choice in education, private schools, and independent schools. I think that's great, that parents get that choice, but do you think it's going to increase confidence in the public system if we take one of the least enrolled and subscribed school divisions in the province and we cut them back over \$2,000 per student? Do you think that's going to help them? Do you think that the superintendent is going to be coming here

thanking us for taking that away because the NDP and their union friends said that it's better?

Well, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said, this is not just "a single line item." These are lives. These are educations, educations of people I know, families I represent, and they're not a line item to this Assembly, not to this party, not on this side of the aisle. The members opposite can use language like that if they'd like, but I promise I won't be doing that because the fact that those kids are getting educated to a more effective level because they have more supports they need this year under this government is something I'm proud of.

This is a school division where the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, when that individual was the Minister of Education, had not funded a school, where children were graduating out of a motel class. A motel is where these kids were graduating in Blue Hills. [interjection] It's funded now; that's correct. I hear heckles from members opposite. Thank you, Minister of Education today from Red Deer-North. I'm very grateful, and so are those families whose children were going to school in a motel room.

It's absolutely backwards for the members opposite to suggest that somehow they're fighting on the side of the children and of education. The truth is that they're working to go backwards. This motion brings my constituency backwards. It takes money away from them were we to follow through on it. The weighted moving average brings flexibility to school boards because they can plan with certainty what is going to happen. The truth is that under this model that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is suggesting, it would be worse for my constituents.

I have an obligation here, not just because I'm elected and the Constitution says I should but because I personally care about those children. I have an obligation to oppose it. I have an obligation to educate the Member for Edmonton-Glenora's colleagues to let them know that this is cynical politics. If they haven't looked into it, please do. The truth is that you as members of the opposition have an obligation, as we all do, to understand the truth of the consequence of what we vote on. Please do not vote to take away funding from the education of children in my riding because they're too far away from you or for whatever reason that has been drafted up in your head, whatever talking points some genius in the NDP, you know, war room has worked up. The truth is that, bottom line, we would lose money, and that would make it more difficult to educate the children in my constituency.

I'm asking members of all sides of the House to truly consider the consequences. If we look at the consequences of what happens, if we go backwards – I listed a number of divisions in my riding. It's true across the province, true primarily of rural constituencies. The truth is that we don't want to go backwards in rural Alberta, and that's why we voted out the NDP. That's why we didn't want the ministers of the front bench of the day to continue governing this province. We understood that they were not looking after the interests of our constituents.

We care deeply for our children in rural Alberta. I care about them in my riding. That means that we have to make sure that funding is there for families that choose to go into public and separate education in Alberta. That means we have to support them in good times and in bad, and the weighted moving average is the best way for us to make sure we have stability, predictability, which allows planning and flexibility for our school divisions. I know in meetings I've had with them in my constituency that they're grateful. They understand that it is something we need to continue to move forward on, and I ask all members of this House, whatever side you're on, to please don't vote against the kids at Peace River.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was some serious spin. Let's go back to the motion. The motion is about restoring per-student provincial funding in the Ministry of Education budget in line with levels during the 2018-2019 fiscal year, and providing additional support to school boards to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Alberta's students.

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

I'm going to take this to my constituency. Because the member liked to talk about his, I'll talk about mine. Now, this is from public reporting in 2019, okay? This isn't even this year. This is 2019. Both school boards, the greater St. Albert Catholic, which also includes Morinville and Legal, as well as the St. Albert public school board, reported that they anticipated significant cuts. Significant cuts. St. Albert public was talking about a big hit of \$2.9 million in 2019 and then the following year another \$4.6 million. Greater St. Albert Catholic was looking at \$2.5 million and then \$3.6 million. I mean, the spin about, "The NDP is trying to reduce education funding," is actually ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

5:40

But I want to spend a little bit of time talking about the actual facts. The UCP claim that they haven't cut funding because they've maintained levels at \$8.2 billion. This does not take into account changes in population. We know that in 2018-19 there were 730,375 students; this means funding per student was \$11,257. In '20-21 there were 756,638 students enrolled in Alberta, bringing funding per student to \$10,824. This is a \$433 cut per student. No amount of UCP spin will change this fact.

But it gets worse. Let's talk about just this last summer, let's say. In the middle of the summer during a pandemic we found out on Twitter that 20,000 educational support staff were let go. We know now that only about half are back, and that has real implications for students. So I take offence with the previous member standing up and wagging his finger at members over here because we don't care about students. This is from the same government that just summarily got rid of 20,000 educational support staff. Now, we know that includes educational assistants, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, and so many other support staff.

The reason that I bring this up is because I want to talk about a group of students that are really being negatively impacted by these changes, and I'm going to talk about St. Albert and Greater St. Albert Catholic, which includes Morinville and Legal as well as St. Albert public.

We know that alone in this particular district, they have lost so many EAs that they can't function properly. Let me tell you what that looks like. In a classroom where you are trying to allow students with disabilities to be integrated, to be included in regular classrooms, it is almost impossible without an appropriate EA for the appropriate number of hours in the day or days of the week. It is absolutely impossible. Now, layer on all of the COVID rules that are in place, where you have a lot of students that need assistance. They have trouble understanding public health orders. They have trouble understanding what is two metres apart. They have trouble understanding: I can't go and touch another person the way that I used to; I can't touch the things that I used to. They don't know, perhaps, how to put on a mask. They don't know, often, how to wash their hands or how to use hand sanitizers. A lot of EAs literally are doing hand-over-hand work with these students so they can be there.

Now, if they're in a school where the students that have special needs or that are labelled as having special needs are put into a segregated classroom, it is even worse because you have a teacher there who has also lost an EA. So now you can't even rely on the other students who very often step up and support students with disabilities in their own classroom. Now you have a classroom that has lost EA support and lost all kinds of other support. I won't even get into PUF. I won't even get into speech-language therapy. I won't even get into the psychologists that used to assist or the behavioural therapists that used to assist. We lost tens of thousands of those. They're not all back, and we're paying the price. To stand up and lecture about that we don't care about students and that this motion doesn't do everything to actually raise the profile to say that we need to do more is absolutely ridiculous.

You know, I'm going to tell a story. My daughter: she graduated animal health; however, she decided to go back to school to become a teacher. Really bad timing because she will graduate right away. She's finishing up as a student teacher right now in an Edmonton school, and oddly enough, no choice of hers, she is now in a special ed class, and I think that she's teaching 11-, 12-, and some 13-year-olds. She's got a full class. This is a full class. Now, imagine you have one teacher who now has a student teacher – this is one class – and guess how much EA support they get in a day? They get a couple of hours. There are, like, 20 students in that class, and they get a couple of hours. Can you imagine? They lost support from what they had last year, from what they had the year before, so you've got a class that is now struggling to do the work in addition to trying to meet the public health orders that are in place to keep the teachers, to keep the staff, and to keep the students safe. That requires investment, that requires money, that requires more money, and that's what this government is failing to do, so I'm thankful to the member for bringing forward this motion to talk about why it's important to restore the funding.

I mean, you can spin all you like. The fact is that there are more students. There is more need. We have a pandemic right now, which increases the need for support staff, but that support staff is not there. We have lost teachers, we have lost EAs, we have lost support staff, and the school boards themselves – the public reporting I told you about right off the top was from last year from the chair of the St. Albert public and greater St. Albert Catholic, both of them on the record saying: the UCP cut our budget. You can move it around all you like, call it different lines, a different way of funding. You cut the budget, and then you cut support staff, but, you know, you gave people a couple of masks, so there is that.

It is absolutely shameful that the members opposite would stand up and say: how dare you bring a motion to increase funding to make it more fair for the students, for the teachers, for education in Alberta. I'm actually very happy that this motion is here, and I will be happy to vote for it and to support it. I think that this constant shell game of, "Oh, no, no; we increased it here; it's just a different way of organizing it" is absolutely ridiculous and not fair to the students and the teachers and all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, in looking for members to continue debate on the motion, I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to rise in support, to speak to this motion to urge the government to fund the education system properly, on a per-student basis.

Now, according to government documents each student in 2018 got \$11,257. Fast-forward to 2020, and we see \$10,824 on a per-student basis. That's in raw dollars. It is not adjusted for inflation.

In 2018 CPI was 2.44 per cent and in 2019, 1.81. Mr. Speaker, money loses value over time. This is a basic mathematical concept that we learn, and it's a pretty simple multiplication by a percentage, which one also learns in the grade 6 curriculum, with which I am now intimately familiar because I had two weeks at home with my children when there was an outbreak at their school.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, just for the record in terms of the Lethbridge public school division – in the interest of time I'm going to focus on Lethbridge public, not the Catholic or the francophone; it's just a simple matter of time – on November 28, 2019, the *Lethbridge Herald* reported that the provincial government's budget cuts mean, quote, a \$6.5 million hit for Lethbridge school board this fall. The board took some money out of its budget in terms of salary and staff and contingency savings. It took \$2.1 million out of some operating reserves, and the budget adjustments became essential after the provincial government brought in their budget on October 24, 2019. The provincial budget essentially set the table for a \$6.54 million reduction in the Lethbridge public school division's funding, and they made some changes as a result in the elimination of teaching positions and in educational assistant positions.

Fast-forward to 2020, and the Lethbridge school division then releases their preliminary budget for 2021. They were then at that point forecasting 3.8 full-time teaching positions after having already eliminated a few teaching positions out of Lethbridge public, but the support staff at that point were being reduced by 41 positions, of which nearly 31 were educational assistants. Now, that was before thousands of people across the province, 20,000, were summarily fired through Facebook, and people in my constituency found out that they had lost their jobs from my Facebook feed, which is an unclassy way indeed to discharge one's responsibilities as a minister of the Crown on a Saturday afternoon, but there we are.

5:50

When it is claimed that there is more money, there is demonstrably not more money. You can watch what the government says or you can watch what they do, Mr. Speaker, and what they do is that they have reduced the amounts of money going to school boards, in particular for places where we see rapidly growing student populations. Lethbridge needs a new west-side elementary school for the public school division, at the very least. We have also seen nothing in terms of any movement for that new elementary school at Garry Station in Lethbridge-West.

The other way that you can know what is actually happening in the education system is to go and talk to people who are working in the education system, Mr. Speaker. I have spent some of my time this fall chatting with teachers out in school fields, just dropping in and talking to people outside in a circle, and I can reliably report to you that teachers are stressed, that parents are stressed, that kids are stressed, and that there is way less money to get the job done. And I haven't even talked about the necessary funds with respect to all of the different protocols that have to happen and the different kinds of situations that teachers and their fewer educational assistants have to respond to in terms of children who are differently abled and need different kinds of supports inside the classroom and outside.

Mr. Speaker, all of this comes down to: do we have the appropriate supports in place to keep school moving? The answer to that is no. It was no even absent the pandemic, but this makes it even worse. When you reduce that per-student funding, when you reduce the amount of money going to boards, necessitating quite large reductions in numbers of staff and ability to respond to changing conditions of the pandemic, you end up with people

falling through the cracks, policies falling through the cracks through no fault of anyone's. You end up with a situation where outbreaks in schools are not properly traced and managed because we have a failure on the education system side to have smaller classrooms, and then we have a failure on the health care side.

You know, on April 7, 2020, I went back and read the transcript of the Premier's address to the province. Sometimes, as I say, it's better to watch what they do and not what they say, but it is interesting to go back and see what they said, Mr. Speaker, because it differs markedly from what they actually did.

First of all, you know, on April 7, when the Premier did a televised address, he actually expressed his sympathies to those who had lost lives due to COVID-19, something that I certainly have seen less of. Certainly, we see some words here like: our curve more closely resembles countries that are successful with the virus, like South Korea, rather than a sharp upward rise seen in countries like Italy, Spain, and the United States. Well, that's not the case anymore.

He then goes on to talk about modelling, testing, and tracing. None of those things have happened, in particular since kids have gone back to school. We know that that testing and tracing hasn't happened.

The Premier waited eight hours for his test, Mr. Speaker, while my kid waited eight days when he was out of school. Now parents are getting phone calls from teachers. AHS is not contact tracing in schools at all. Already-stressed teachers who are dealing with fewer resources in the classroom are now also having to take up the role of the public health care system during a deadly virus and a global pandemic. It is shameful. The numbers are there, but if you don't believe the numbers, then go talk to the teachers and the parents, and they will tell the story of what has happened to education in this province in 2020.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Seeing the time and given that Standing Order 8(3) allows the mover of the motion other than a government motion five minutes to close debate, I will now call upon the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to do just that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to start by clarifying for all members of this House because I know that there were a couple of speakers who talked about this being about: which specific formula? This has nothing to do with a formula. This is about the total number of dollars being allocated to education. Don't let people on the government side of the House tell you that this is about picking winners and losers.

Honestly, what has been demonstrated through subsequent budgets of this government – already we've seen two – is their desire to erode educational funding, to erode funding that is desperately needed for schools in Edmonton, in St. Albert, in Lethbridge, in Peace River, and on the other side of Lethbridge. Students and the staff who are working with them need additional supports, not fewer, and that's simply what this is about. This isn't about a formula. Nowhere in here does it talk about a formula. It talks about the funding levels that are available to Alberta students. It doesn't say how to fund them; it's the total number of dollars.

Please know that if you stand in this place and you vote against this motion, you are voting against restoring money to education globally, which is, in turn, potentially a cut to your own district. This isn't about one specific formula. Your record on this will stand. How you vote here today will reflect what your caucus's values are today, tomorrow, and as we lead into this election.

The second part of the motion is about COVID in schools, and let's take a second here to do a bit of a reality check on what the

realities are, especially in our two largest urban centres. In Edmonton public, reporting as of Friday – it might even be higher today given the numbers that we saw over the weekend – 40 per cent of schools had COVID cases in them. Edmonton Catholic: 44 per cent. CBE: 41 per cent. Calgary Catholic: 46 per cent. That is current as of the most recent reporting data on how many schools were impacted in those specific jurisdictions, and I know that there were cases all over the province.

I grew up in the north. You all know that. I've mentioned it more than once. I spoke with the grade 6 students in my hometown, and they had COVID in their school, in their class. This is something that touches all of us. This is something that right now we're doing our best to live through and get through to the time where we can all be vaccinated and we can live a somewhat near-normal existence. But these are not near-normal times, and the fact is that education funding has been cut, and you have a chance here today to send a message to the government, to send a message saying that we think it's important that education funding be restored.

I believe members when they say that they love somebody who's a teacher or that they know somebody who's a teacher. Teachers are exhausted. The number of teachers and principals who have told me that they spend more time on the phone calling, telling students not to come to school, than they do focused on student teaching and learning right now is devastating. They didn't go into leadership positions at school so they could spend their time calling, calling, calling, texting, e-mailing, telling people to stay away for their safety and the safety of their classmates. They went into this line of work because they believe in students, their potential, and they want to contribute.

This is our chance to tell the folks that we all say we love and that we respect and that we give, you know, congratulations to

occasionally and tell them how great they are – this is our chance to actually put our values to a vote. The vote is on whether or not we want to see education funding increase. It's been very clearly documented that with global education funding, when student numbers increase and the budget does not, it means an erosion of educational dollars for all. This is a chance not to say that you're picking one board over another or one formula over another – none of that. None of those talking points that were given in this debate by the members of the government are actually in the motion.

Please know that it is the motion and the vote on the motion that will be recorded in this place. Please know that it is about the erosion of educational dollars, educational dollars that already were demonstrated through the MacKinnon report to be far lower than in Ontario and British Columbia. What we are asked to do here today is to say: don't erode them further. Step up and do something; \$128 million was cut in the spring, when the more than 20,000 educational workers were laid off. One hundred and twenty-eight million. Yes, \$10 million was given back through the acquisition of basic PPE, masks, thermometers, and some hand sanitizer, but \$128 million was cut. Please don't come in here and pat your minister on the back for restoring a fraction of what was already cut. Stand in this place, stand by your vote, and stand up for kids and the staff who work with them.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 513 lost]

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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