



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 7, 2020

Day 77

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

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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)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UCP),  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
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Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
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Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
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Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

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

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

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Eggen  
Glasgo  
Gray  
Jones  
Phillips  
Singh  
Turton

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Horner

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

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

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

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Ceci  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sabir  
Walker  
Williams

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes  
Dach  
Guthrie  
Reid  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Stephan  
Toor

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Fir  
Ganley  
Getson  
Loewen  
Rehn  
Singh  
Smith  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 7, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing. We will be led in the singing of our national anthem by recording artist Brooklyn Elhard.

**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.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Legislative Assembly of British Columbia Election of the New Speaker by Acclamation

**The Speaker:** Before we get to the daily Routine today, I would just like to let all members know that earlier today I sent a letter to congratulate the newly elected Speaker of the province of British Columbia, the Hon. Raj Chouhan. The MLA for Burnaby-Edmonds was unanimously – I don't mean to put any pressure on you, but wink, wink, nudge, nudge – elected as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia earlier today. He is the first Punjabi-speaking Sikh Speaker in the history of Canada. I'm sure all members will join me in welcoming him to the speakership of the province of British Columbia.

### Members' Statements

#### Local Businesses in Central Peace-Notley

**Mr. Loewen:** On Friday local businesses in Valleyview created an impromptu reverse parade on Main Street. It was great to see all the decorated trucks and people driving back and forth to take it all in and listening to Brooke and Greg sing and play Christmas carols from a truck deck for three hours. One thing that struck me was Paron Ventures hanging a big sign from two pickup trucks across Main Street that read: thank you for supporting local.

In this crazy time of COVID we know our small businesses have been suffering. These are the businesses that sponsor the local sports team, donate money to local charities, and provide the services you need. The owners are our neighbours, the ones that volunteer locally and the folks that will help you out if you have a flat tire, run out of gas, or just need someone to talk to.

It doesn't matter if you're at the new Fox Creek Creative, that highlights local home businesses and artists, or at an old favourite

like Boyts hardware in Fairview, that has so much more than just hardware. You can check out Ruby's Fresh Decor in Valleyview or maybe Ruby's Variety Shop in Fairview, two completely different stores with lots of cool gift ideas. There's the IDA Pharmacy in Falher and a Home Hardware in McLennan. You can spend hours shopping in each. From Little Smoky to Cleardale, Bay Tree to Eaglesham, small general stores are the heart of their community.

Need a doughnut fix? We have the best doughnuts ever at the Crooked Creek General Store; at Wanham's Bear Country Inn; at The Tractor Pit in Girouxville; IGAs and Freson IGAs in Fox Creek, Valleyview, Fairview, Fahler, and Spirit River; and Co-op stores in Rycroft, Falher, and Valleyview; even the Berwyn and McLennan Bigway Foods; and, of course, Timmy's in Valleyview. There are many small home businesses offering food services, like Mandy's Tea & Desserts and Perogy, Please, that you can find on Facebook.

Now, if you can't make it to any of these businesses within the Central Peace-Notley constituency, then make sure you go online and order or buy gift certificates for your friends and relatives in the area. You name it; we've got it in Central Peace-Notley. I also encourage everyone to donate to your local food bank. They depend on your support from our communities in order to support their communities.

**The Speaker:** I can confirm that the comments about the doughnuts are a hundred per cent correct.

### Premier's Remarks on COVID-19 Related Deaths

**Mr. Nielsen:** Six hundred and fifteen Albertans have lost their lives to COVID-19, an unspeakable tragedy. On behalf of our entire caucus I would like to offer our deepest condolences for their irreplaceable losses. These lives are to be cherished and the losses to be mourned. They are not simply case numbers and not just statistics, a lesson this Premier has yet to learn. I was shocked and appalled to watch last week as the Premier went back to his old playbook of casting blame, deflecting responsibility by minimizing the huge losses Albertans have suffered by blaming them on comorbidities.

We all remember when the Premier told this House that the majority of those who would lose their lives to COVID-19 had already lived past the average life expectancy, and only days ago he told a Facebook Live crowd that only 3 per cent of lives lost did not have comorbidity. He then read off a list of comorbidities that had impacted those who lost their lives, again to diminish the loss of 600 lives. The Premier blamed dementia, which impacts over 40,000 Albertans. The Premier blamed respiratory disease. I know many who suffer from asthma. He blamed cancer; Alberta sees 16,000 new cases each year. He blamed diabetes, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, and more. Was the Premier saying that anyone who suffers these afflictions is expendable? Why does he try to minimize the tragedy that we should feel with the loss of every life? That is not leadership, Mr. Speaker. That is cowardice plain and simple.

These Albertans who lost their lives to COVID-19 deserve better than having the Premier add an asterisk to their name as once again he tries to downplay his failures with this pandemic. The Premier needs to get his head on straight. He was elected to lead, to show compassion, and to fight to save every life. He was not elected to use statistics to justify half-measures to fight the spread. Albertans deserve better.

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

### The Perfect Gift Store in Lac La Biche

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to talk about a special nonprofit organization that serves the Lac La Biche region, The Perfect Gift Store. I was thrilled to visit The Perfect Gift Store a couple of weeks ago and see the truly amazing work they've done to bring the Christmas spirit to families in need. The elves at the Perfect Gift have transformed the storefront in downtown Lac La Biche into Santa's workshop. With over 20 beautiful decorated Christmas trees, stunning nativity scenes, Santa's toyland, a candy bar, a wrapping station, and, of course, Christmas carols playing throughout, it really does put you in the Christmas spirit.

It is a ministry of the New Life Victory Fellowship church, and throughout the year they collect brand new toys and monetary donations to be able to provide to our community during the Christmas season. Their entire purpose is to see the restoration of love, memories, and holiday joy to families who otherwise would not have the means to buy presents for their children. Christmas is a time of giving and remembering how truly blessed we are. This year many families have faced financial hardships, and with Christmas fast approaching, they've felt an added stress and pressure.

The Perfect Gift Store helps ensure that every child has a gift under the tree on Christmas Eve. Registration ends today, December 7, and appointments will take place throughout the next couple of weeks. Their elves even tell me that over 100 families and 300 kids have already registered. Parents and guardians in need are able to register and make a private appointment at The Perfect Gift Store, where they can hand-pick a brand new gift for their child at no cost. They also get to enjoy all of the Christmas magicalness within that building.

Mr. Speaker, so much of the magic of Christmas is our determination to shine brightly when times are darkest. This year has been darker than most, and I am heartened to know that Lac La Biche's community spirit is shining strong. God bless.

### 1:40 School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Thirty million dollars: that's the deficit facing Edmonton public schools for the cost of just their COVID-19 measures because this UCP Premier and Education minister failed to properly fund our schools over the summer. That's \$30 million that won't be going towards teaching our kids or supporting learning. You really have to wonder about the priorities of this government and what they spend their time on. They chose to cut education funding in the middle of a pandemic, and they've been focused on implementing their ideological curriculum rewrite. That was their summer agenda. What this government didn't do this summer was plan for the virus that was staring us all in the face. It's like the UCP Premier and Education minister closed their eyes, crossed their fingers, and just hoped that the second wave wouldn't hit our schools, but it did.

We've heard their rhetoric. They claimed that the best education plan was right here in Alberta. They said that they had the gold standard. They said everything was going to work out just fine. Just trust them, they promised. But less than three months into the school year, grade 7 through 12 students have been told to stay home, and tens of thousands of students have had to isolate because they've been close contacts to someone with COVID in school. Our schools are in rough shape. Classrooms are closed, students are stressed, parents are frustrated, and staff are close to burnout.

Of course, it didn't have to be this way. Throughout the summer teachers, parents, community members, and the NDP put forward ideas to get everyone ready for the second wave and to make

schools safer. They were good ideas backed by experts, evidence, and interjurisdictional research, but the government must have had their earplugs in because they refused to listen. Now we have the results: a failing grade for this UCP government, Premier, and minister. But those who are paying the price are the students, staff, families, and communities throughout Alberta.

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

### COVID-19 Protective Measures

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had two COVID tests this year so far. The first one was a throat swab at a drive-through location in Westlock. The nurse, like many I've known over the years, was a pleasant person and made me feel at ease as she took this big, large cotton swab and jammed it in the back of my throat as I sat in my pickup and she leaned through the window. The second one, more recently performed, was in Westlock at a different location but, as luck would have it, the same nurse. This time: a sinus swab. I darn near bent over backwards to get away from that thing when it was jammed halfway up my nose. I had to take a seat. Try number two was a ticket, and I couldn't make it through standing as that swab seemed to be as long as my arm.

I'm greatly appreciative for all the folks that are working tirelessly so that we can get back those test results. I'm also very appreciative of all those who are being cautious and, when they show symptoms, get tested if warranted or stay at home and not spread whatever bug you may have picked up. You see, everyone I know is trying to do the right things through this. As we learn more about the COVID-19 virus, the more reasonable and practical decisions we make will be the ones that will get us back to normal as soon as possible.

My plea to all Albertans is not to panic, not to be apathetic, but to be aware and responsible, to take the right steps to minimize the spread. Acknowledge that you do have control over your actions, and they will impact others. Wash your hands lots. Keep your distance from others that are not part of your cohort. Pay attention to the personal hygiene. Stay at home when you feel sick, and when needed and warranted, wear a mask.

There is no silver bullet that will make this all go away, but be sure that you take some practical steps to slow the spread and the impacts on all Albertans. We are fortunate not to have to be fighting a war like our grandparents did, with bombs and bullets. Our battle right now can be fought with soap, water, personal protective equipment, and a strong dose of common sense. Keep strong. Carry on. You've got this, Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has a statement.

### COVID-19 Protective Measure Enforcement

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's retail and service workers are being put in a very dangerous situation because of this UCP government. The burden of enforcing public health orders has fallen on store clerks, servers, cashiers, and other essential workers. Trying to enforce masking laws and other health orders in their establishments has caused them to face abuse, threats, and even violent assault.

Because of this government's stubborn failure to implement strong enforcement, a bartender in my constituency was brutally assaulted when she informed a patron that it was necessary to wear a mask while walking around the restaurant. She did everything right. She provided a mask at the door at the business's expense,

enforced the new service restrictions, and dealt with the patron politely and respectfully. For all of her efforts she was rewarded by having a glass smashed in her face, requiring 14 stitches. My heart breaks for this worker, Mr. Speaker. She works so hard to keep her family's business afloat during a public health and economic emergency.

But Albertans can't do it alone. They need supports for small businesses, support for the restaurant industry, that has been hard hit, and support for servers and other essential workers that are putting themselves in dangerous situations when they're only trying to keep the staff and patrons safe by enforcing Alberta's public health orders.

This government must step up and protect our service and retail workers with enforcement. This Premier and members in his caucus need to stop trivializing this pandemic and pandering to antimaskers, who feel emboldened by this government, and develop an enforcement policy so that our essential workers are no longer put in harm's way.

### Firearms Policies

**Ms Glasgo:** Mr. Speaker, in May the Trudeau Liberals announced sweeping changes to Canada's firearms laws in the midst of an economic crisis and a global pandemic. By the stroke of his pen, Justin Trudeau and Bill Blair made criminals out of thousands of law-abiding gun owners, adding 1,500 makes and models to a list just because they didn't like how they looked. And in case you thought that this was about public safety, which – spoiler alert – it's not, they added a coffee company to the list because, hey, it had "Black Rifle" in their company name.

As a proud gun-toting Albertan I was asked to be the chair of the Alberta Firearms Advisory Committee. The committee consulted Albertans through an online survey that garnered a whopping 40,000 responses, receiving more traffic than the government of Alberta's home page on its first day of launching. During two successful town halls we took questions from across the province, and one thing was clear, Mr. Speaker: Justin Trudeau's gun grab is – well, let's keep it parliamentary – very unpopular. At the request of our committee, on behalf of Albertans, Alberta's Justice minister has created the office of the chief provincial firearms officer and is currently vetting potential candidates. This action works towards fulfilling the mandate of the Fair Deal Panel and ensures that Alberta, not Ottawa, takes the lead.

Many Albertans also voiced opposition to the potential handgun ban in our municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to say that I'll be tabling private member's Bill 211 this week, that will ban Alberta municipalities from passing any legislation related to firearms, protecting urban gun owners from losing their legally acquired property.

Mr. Speaker, this gun grab was never about public safety. There is no question that we need to prevent violence in our communities, but the gun grab is not the way to do it. Instead of spending Albertans' hard-earned money on a buyback program, Justin Trudeau and Bill Blair should look in their own backyards at the thugs and gangbangers smuggling illegal firearms across the borders. Alberta's lawful firearms ownership is well documented and a distinct part of our way of life, with thousands of Albertans taking part in activities such as sport shooting, collecting, manufacturing, selling, and hunting. These people deserve to be respected, and I'm proud to be part of a government that's doing just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Gender-based Violence Prevention

**Member Irwin:** Yesterday, December 6, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, we took the

time to remember and recommit to action in addressing gender-based violence. We honoured the memory of the 14 women murdered at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. These women were murdered for being women by a man determined to kill feminists. Yesterday we mourned, and today we commit to doing better. Today we fight.

Today we're calling for action from this government. We know that economic security is crucial for tackling domestic violence. We know that COVID-19 and the recession are disproportionately impacting women, a fact this government refuses to acknowledge. Women's participation in the labour force is down from a historic high to its lowest level in over 30 years. We know this is putting women at a higher risk of domestic violence, and many have called this increase in violence a shadow pandemic. Lives are at stake, and this is why we need action from this UCP government.

What does this look like? It looks like economic justice, with an economic recovery plan for women, two spirit, and gender-diverse folks and for all those deeply impacted by this pandemic. It looks like applying an intersectional, gender-based lens to all policy decisions, not dismissing it as a kooky academic theory. It means ending a tax on public-sector workers, many of whom are women. It means universal access to affordable child care and housing. It looks like pay equity and paid domestic violence leave. It means implementing the calls for justice aimed at ending the genocide of indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people. It's about being antiracist and combatting misogyny.

Yesterday this government claimed it would take action, but those are the same words we've heard before, and words don't save lives. Yesterday we mourned. Today it's time for this government to act because we can't keep waiting for tomorrow.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### COVID-19 Protective Measures

**Ms Notley:** Active cases tripled, hospitalizations quadrupled, and we recorded more deaths in one month than the first six combined. Mr. Speaker, November was a tragedy. The increase in active cases recorded last month equals the entire population of Canmore. Tomorrow it will be two weeks since the Premier's half measures, and he has to face the truth. They are not working. Over the last two weeks Alberta has broken records day after day after day. Premier, we can't afford to wait any longer. Will you finally take real action to stop the spread of COVID?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the government has taken real action. I know that the leader of the NDP loves to bash Alberta. The reality is that Albertans have performed admirably throughout the pandemic, through most of the pandemic until the increase in cases in late October, doing much better than the large-population provinces, all the U.S. states, and most European countries. We are very concerned about the current spike in cases, and if additional restrictions are necessary in light of the situation, they will be taken.

**Ms Notley:** We're told the R value of the virus in Alberta right now is roughly 1.2. This Premier's half measures aren't working. It's not if; it's right now. When researchers at Yale did a county-by-county analysis on measures in the U.S. to prevent COVID-19, they had a few clear takeaways. One of them: "mask mandates stand out for their effectiveness and relative lack of economic tradeoffs," and simply recommending masks "doesn't do anything." So when will

the Premier look at the evidence and implement a province-wide mandatory mask mandate?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was parroting the World Health Organization's opposition to masks in the spring, this was the first government in Canada to recommend mask use. This is to date the only government in Canada to have made available millions of free masks in addition to 2 million reusable masks for schoolchildren. This is a government that has imposed a workplace mask mandate for the urban metropolises, where 85 per cent of our cases are, and 90 per cent of the province is covered by municipal mask mandates. If additional measures need to be taken, they will.

**Ms Notley:** What Alberta is, Mr. Speaker, is the only province not to have a province-wide mask mandate. Nineteen thousand Albertans are sick. When confronted in an interview with the fact that we have more cases and fewer restrictions than Ontario, the Health minister blamed social gatherings, except the Premier is allowing social gatherings at bars, restaurants, casinos, and water parks. On top of that, while Dr. Hinshaw is calling for a province-wide effort, the Premier keeps telling Albertans that COVID is a city problem. Premier, tomorrow will be two weeks since your half measures. Albertans need you to act now. Why won't you?

**Mr. Kenney:** Two points, Mr. Speaker. While we must stress the urgency of the situation, it is never helpful to exaggerate the facts. The leader of the NDP just said that 19,000 Albertans are sick. In fact, the significant majority of people who test positive for COVID-19 and a significant number more who never test positive but who become positive actually never exhibit symptoms or have only mild, cold-like symptoms, and they are not sick. We are most concerned, however, about the pressure on the hospital system, which is why, if additional measures need to be taken, they will. But to say to all of those businesses that have had to shut down, to the tens of thousands of people put out of work that they are victims of merely half measures is insensitive.

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

**Ms Notley:** And minimizing the impact of this pandemic the way the Premier just did is an unprecedented demonstration of irresponsibility.

#### COVID-19 Related Care Facility Safety Protocols

**Ms Notley:** Nowhere is this tragedy felt greater than in seniors' homes. In November we lost 150 Albertans due to outbreaks in long-term care. That's five preventable deaths every day. These are our parents, our grandparents; these are the Albertans who built this province. We can't sit by and watch this happen today. We are calling for rapid testing twice per week to detect cases in long-term care. Will the Premier adopt this plan, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in April – in April – I called out the federal government for the snail's pace of their approval of rapid testing. I called on them immediately to approve rapid tests. I called on Alberta Health to begin preparing to roll out those rapid tests, and guess who I was criticized by? The NDP. They said that they trust the federal government. Well, the federal government bought all of the Panbio domestically produced rapid test kits. They completely cornered the market. It's taken them until this week to ship them to the provinces. They will immediately be distributed to long-term care facilities to facilitate rapid testing on-site.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, there have been more Albertans over 80 diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past five weeks than in the entire rest of the pandemic, more than 400, and we know that 1 in 4 will die, yet last month, when the Premier announced nothing to protect seniors' homes, what we saw instead was granting exemptions allowing these homes to share staff and further spread the risk. Will this Premier hire more staff, use the \$300 million top-up, and make sure that every staff member gets tested on a daily basis so that we can keep seniors safe?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, every death, from any cause, is a tragedy, and this is particularly the case for seniors, who are vulnerable, especially those with multiple chronic conditions. That's why I called upon all of the players in our health system to build a wall of defence around long-term care facilities in the spring. The exemption to which she refers are 26 exemptions out of 300 long-term care facilities, each of them individually granted by Dr. Hinshaw for extenuating reasons such as remote rural communities with very limited workforces. We do hope to roll out immediately these rapid tests as soon as they are finally made available by the government of Canada.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the clear and present danger to seniors is growing, and it's unacceptable. Families feel helpless. More to the point, the shortage of continuing care staff was something that you could have seen last spring, when we called on you to introduce a workforce strategy. What have you done? You've left \$300 million on the table, you're undercutting safety for workers in those settings, and you're not hiring more. When will this Premier take this issue seriously, hire and train and pay fairly more continuing care staff to keep seniors safe?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, more than \$260 million is supporting the safety of residents and staff at long-term care, designated supportive living facilities, and seniors' lodges. This includes, I believe, approximately \$30 million in wage top-ups that was held up by the NDP and their allies in the AUPE. We have asked the chief medical officer to come forward with additional recommendations if more measures need to be taken to keep our long-term care residents safe.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier promised in the spring to build a wall of protection around residents in continuing care. It's about time that wall got built. Deaths in continuing care due to COVID-19 are approaching 400. We lost 150 residents to the virus in November alone. We know these deaths are preventable. My leader just asked this question, and it is important, so I will ask it again. Premier, will you commit to implementing the rapid testing in all continuing care homes in this province?

**Mr. Kenney:** I would suggest that the NDP actually pivot when they have an answer rather than reading a scripted question. The answer was already yes. Let me turn that back on the NDP. Why, when I asked the government of Canada to accelerate rapid testing in the spring, did they attack me? This isn't so much about public health for them. It's always and everywhere about politics, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Sigurdson:** The historic lack of adequate staffing in continuing care is more apparent than ever due to the pandemic. Programming is cancelled. Residents are not fed and bathed regularly. The spread



of the virus is due to staff being forced to work at multiple sites. The single-site staffing order from the UCP has an exception list so long that it is ineffective. The UCP did nothing to prepare for the second wave and refuse to launch an inquiry into the deaths in continuing care. To the Premier: will you at least start to address this problem of staffing by implementing rapid testing?

**Mr. Kenney:** Apparently, they're completely incapable of taking yes for an answer. Mr. Speaker, I don't know. How we are supposed to administer rapid testing with kits that have not been approved by the government of Canada in a market that they have cornered and for which they have not yet fulfilled our demands?

With respect to staffing, she talks about a long list of exemptions. Fewer than 10 per cent of the long-term care operations in Alberta have been exempted from the single-workplace staff requirement, each one of them approved by the chief medical officer for extenuating reasons. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

2:00

**Ms Sigurdson:** The spread of COVID-19 in continuing care has been isolating and tragic for residents. Without programming and visitors, residents are struggling with their mental and physical health, yet I am continually inspired by the resilience of these Albertans. For many residents this Christmas and holiday season could in fact be their last, and they deserve to experience it in dignity. A stronger COVID response, including better testing at continuing care facilities, could help, obviously, with that. Premier, will you commit to support rapid testing twice a week today for residents so they can live in a dignified manner?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, it's becoming apparent that the NDP doesn't even understand the science of the rapid testing, Mr. Speaker, because it is scientifically useless on people who are asymptomatic. We will follow the scientific guidelines of the rapid test producers of Health Canada and the chief medical officer to focus them on individuals who are symptomatic. When she says that we could reduce the risk to zero: that, I think, is virtually impossible, but one way of doing that would be to absolutely bar any compassionate visits or care visits from family members, which would itself take an enormous toll on the frail elderly who are struggling right now. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### COVID-19 Statistics and Health System Capacity

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier was too focused on his own political fortunes and pandering to the antimaskers in his caucus and his party and failed to take action to slow the spread of COVID-19. Now the full weight of the second wave is crashing into our seniors' facilities and our front-line hospital staff, and we're hearing that everyone from social workers to addictions counsellors is being pulled out of their jobs to try to hold back this wave, with no one left to replace the work that they were doing. To the Premier: why did you refuse to take basic steps like a mask policy province-wide before our hospitals got overwhelmed? [interjections]

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we advised mask usage before the World Health Organization, before the Public Health Agency of Canada, in fact, before the Leader of the Opposition started heckling me today. We recommended it months ago. We provided

tens of millions of free masks to Albertans, and 90 per cent of Albertans – but they're more concerned about making a farmer in the middle of his barn into a criminal than actually addressing the problem where it exists, which is in, particularly, areas with dense population. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this Premier pats himself on the back for things he did back in the spring, we're hearing that AHS is moving to literally hire people off the street as untrained workers in our health care system as comfort care aides. The Red Cross is soliciting volunteers to help support our health care system. Even while this crisis deepens, the Premier does nothing but express his disappointment when his friends hold antimask rallies in downtown Calgary. Does this Premier understand that his failure of leadership has meant more infections, more hospitalizations, and more and more pressure on Alberta's overwhelmed hospital workers?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to health care workforce the Canadian Institute for Health Information makes it very clear that Alberta has the highest per capita number of both doctors and nurses in Canada, but because of the significant pressure, we are seeking to hire as many additional staff as we can to support the growing people who are facing hospitalization.

With respect to protests, as I said, I think it's incredibly selfish and irresponsible for people to gather in large numbers even outside, especially if they're not socially distanced or wearing masks. I'll remind the member opposite he did just that at a protest in the spring, contrary to our public health guidelines.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, cancelled surgeries, makeshift intensive care units, field hospitals, Red Cross relief efforts, workers pushed beyond exhaustion, oxygen rationed: these are the consequences of the Premier's refusal to demonstrate any leadership to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. He knew this was coming based on AHS modelling that he refused to share with Albertans. Premier, if you knew that these soaring case numbers would plunge our seniors and our hospitals into crisis, why didn't you act sooner?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I did share AHS modelling with Albertans in a televised address in April of this year and was attacked from the NDP for doing so. They said that I should have left it to the chief medical officer. Once again they're more concerned about politicizing this. They'll attack us for doing A and then doing B. It's all about attacking. It's all about dividing.

With respect to surgeries, fewer surgeries have been cancelled in Alberta than any other province during the COVID era because we've been very carefully managing our health care resources.

### Personal-use Forest Product Permits and Fees

**Mr. Loewen:** Christmas is just around the corner, and despite the challenges we have faced this year, I think Albertans are getting into the Christmas spirit. I have seen lights popping up on houses across my constituency, people setting up Christmas trees, shopping for Christmas gifts, and kids out with their toboggans. While many things will be different this year, a change that Albertans can look forward to is the waiving of the fee to cut down your own Christmas tree. To the minister: what made you decide to bring in changes that would free the trees?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I'm very proud to say that Albertans now have access to more than 87 million acres of public forests in Alberta. This will allow Albertans to go out and cut down the perfect Christmas tree, because at the end of the day, trees belong to Albertans. This has been an incredibly challenging year, and the holiday season will be no different. We hope these changes will bring a little Christmas magic to our homes and encourage Albertans to go out, start new traditions with their families.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that Christmas trees aren't the only thing that was freed this year, given that the changes brought forward by the minister also allow Albertans to apply for a permit to collect firewood at no cost, and given that this will save Albertans money while preserving the sustainability of our forests, can the minister please explain what this changes for Alberta, how much firewood they'll be able to collect, and if this will impact the forests' health?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct in saying that Albertans will also be able to go out and collect firewood for free. When going into our public forests, you're now able to collect up to five cubic metres, or approximately three regular truck beds, of firewood. However, to avoid getting on Santa's naughty list, Albertans will still need to apply for the personal-use forest product permit. Maintaining the permit process ensures that our forests are being harvested in a sustainable way.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that going out and searching for the perfect Christmas tree is a time-honoured tradition that thousands of Albertans participate in every year and given that Albertans will now be able to go out and cut their own tree down and collect firewood for free, how much will this save Albertans every year, and do you think this will increase the number of families participating in this great tradition?

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

**Mrs. Savage:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unwrapping the red tape on Christmas trees will save Albertans \$100,000 this year, but that isn't the only benefit. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's how important family is. That we can now go out with our families, find the perfect Christmas tree in a way that is safe will create memories for a lifetime. I think we'll see many new traditions being started this Christmas, and I encourage Albertans to go out and enjoy our forests as one of them.

### COVID-19 Protective Measures and Economic Recovery

**Ms Ganley:** The UCP continues to try and pit the economy against public health, but most economists agree that if we don't get the virus under control, the virus will destroy our economy. Economist Trevor Tombe highlighted that provinces with the highest job losses also have the highest number of COVID cases. According to his data Alberta had the highest job losses last month and the highest number of COVID cases. Will the government finally admit that their inability to get the virus under control is costing Albertans jobs?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Right now we have about 70 per cent of the people back to work that lost their jobs from this pandemic. About a quarter of a million people are back in the workforce right now. We want to thank all those small-business owners for everything that they've done – putting in place protective equipment for their employees, the Plexiglas that they've done, the hand sanitizer – all the steps that they've done to make sure that they can operate their businesses safely. To the member opposite: why do they want to shut down so many businesses across Alberta? We're trying to make sure we work responsibly, look at the data, look at everything in that light, and work with the health officials to get this right.

**Ms Ganley:** Given that the UCP's inability to control the virus led to the loss of 11,000 jobs last month and given that Calgary and Edmonton have the highest unemployment rates among major Canadian cities while the province's contact tracing system has collapsed, with 85 per cent of COVID cases having unknown origin, and given that confusing and contradictory measures are hurting consumer confidence, for the sake of jobs and our economy will this government restore business and consumer confidence by fixing their broken contact tracing system and when?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, what we've done here in our province – we want to make sure we work with the small businesses to make sure that they have the right training in place, make sure they have the right information. That's what we're going to continue to do. That's why we put in place our relaunch grant, \$200 million there for small businesses, so that they can get through this pandemic. There's a second tranche, that we've recently announced, an additional \$5,000 to support them. We've also supported our tourism industry, which has been hampered by all these travel restrictions, with additional tourism levy abatement until the end of March. That's an additional \$10 million in the pockets of our tourism small businesses across Alberta.

2:10

**Ms Ganley:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that none of the measures mentioned had anything to do with getting the virus under control and given that economist Trevor Tombe has said, "There can be no sustained economic recovery without controlling the virus. Period," and given that the virus is now out of control, leading to thousands of job losses, a deeper economic crisis, and a longer recovery, and given that the UCP is now looking at bringing in field hospitals because our hospitals are already at capacity and they expect another surge of COVID patients, what signal does the government think that hospitals full of COVID patients sends to businesses considering moving to this province?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I hope that that member has a chance to apologize to this Assembly here in short order. Having field hospitals is something that is a contingency plan, a contingency plan for a worst case scenario. When will that member apologize? That's the responsible thing to do. They would attack us if we didn't have them. They'll attack us if we do. It's completely irresponsible of the NDP to continually do this. Ontario has them. B.C. has them. This is what you do to plan for the future responsibly, to keep people safe and healthy. We're going to make sure we protect lives and livelihoods. Shame on the NDP for continuing to do this. It's irresponsible, and it's wrong.

### COVID-19 Response and Calgary Hospital Capacity

**Member Ceci:** Calgary hospitals are overwhelmed because this government is failing to manage the pandemic. We have new

outbreaks at Calgary South Health Campus and the Tom Baker cancer centre. Over the past month every single Calgary hospital has had an outbreak as this pandemic spirals out of control. What is this government's solution to the crisis facing Calgary acute-care facilities? It's securing field hospitals instead of getting this virus under control. To the Minister of Health. Calgary is in crisis mode. When will you step up and get this virus out of hospitals?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, that isn't true. Of course, AHS already has a field tent in the parking lot of the Peter Lougheed Centre, and of course they have procured other tents as they might be required throughout the response to the pandemic. It's like a contingency plan. It's not included in the current forecast, but of course it's prudent planning for AHS to be able to continue to do that to make sure that not only are they able to respond to what's forecasted right now but anything additional to that in the future.

**Member Ceci:** Given that Calgary added 759 new COVID cases in the past 24 hours – and those new cases will be showing up in hospitals in the days and weeks to come – and given that Calgary hospitals are already being told to ration oxygen and given that the front-line health care workers are exhausted and struggling to cope as local leaders beg this Minister of Health to take serious action, to the Minister of Health: when will you get this virus under control, take the pandemic seriously, and prevent a collapse of Calgary's hospital system?

**Mr. Shandro:** This is irresponsible, and it's fearmongering, Mr. Speaker. Our plan began in the spring. It included a plan that was worth – approximately \$2 billion is what we have provided to AHS and our continuing care providers. The strategies that we've implemented that were in consultation with AHS and our continuing care providers – it's, quite frankly, totally irresponsible for the member opposite to be saying that. Our hospitals remain safe. They remain open. We are going to make sure that every Albertan who requires critical care is going to get the care that they need.

**Member Ceci:** Given that the only people I've seen endorsing the government's horrendous pandemic response are the Premier, the minister, and a few members of the UCP caucus who struggle to comprehend the seriousness of COVID-19 and given that this minister was on national news this weekend and claimed that his approach is working for Alberta and given that the mayor of Calgary thinks he's wrong – and so do countless front-line health care workers and infectious disease specialists – to the minister: why don't you prove that you've done everything you can? Publish all of Dr. Hinshaw's recommendations.

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, this is going back to a conversation that we had with the hon. members opposite weeks ago when they had questions about Dr. Hinshaw's involvement. Dr. Hinshaw is involved in the drafting of all the recommendations that come to the COVID cabinet committee and all of the measures that are implemented by government and by Dr. Hinshaw herself. She's included in all of the discussions that happen at the cabinet COVID committee. We're going to continue to listen to her feedback and continue to get those recommendations and understand, from our public health officials, based on the data, what further measures might be required.

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

#### COVID-19 Protective Measures and Christmas

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few short weeks ago our government established additional new restrictions in response to

the rising cases of COVID-19 in our province. As we get closer to the holidays, many Albertans are concerned over just how different this year's celebrations will be. Christmas is only one such holiday celebrated by Albertans this December and January. Given that many holiday traditions are celebrated in large groups of families and friends and given that we are currently under a province-wide public health emergency, to the Minister of Health: how can Albertans fulfill Christmas traditions while still adhering to provincial health mandates?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many people across the province are starting to plan for the holiday season. Last week Dr. Hinshaw encouraged all Albertans to begin preparing for a much different holiday season and to start thinking of creative new ways to celebrate safely, as we did with Easter and Thanksgiving as well as many other holidays throughout the year. We've seen past holidays, as I said, lead to increases in cases and outbreaks as one case can quickly spread to many. For example, Thanksgiving gatherings were an accelerator of spread, and the impacts are still being felt. If making holiday plans, limit contact with anyone outside your household as much as possible, and any larger get-togethers should be done virtually.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Santa Claus has been bringing joy to children and families for many generations now by delivering presents on the night of Christmas Eve. Given that this year's Christmas will be different due to the COVID-19 pandemic and various health mandates in place in the province and given that Santa will be delivering presents as he always does every year and will be stopping at approximately 1.5 million households in Alberta, to the Minister of Health: what precautions should Santa Claus be taking before and after entering Albertans' homes this Christmas Eve to avoid spreading COVID-19, and how many pairs of latex gloves – black, size medium – will be required?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said from the beginning of the pandemic, it's imperative that everybody follow all public health advice. It would include anybody else who's travelling on Christmas, on that day. That includes practising good hygiene, staying at home if you're feeling sick, washing and sanitizing your hands often, covering your coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching your face, keeping physical distancing. Look, as Albertans start to plan for the holiday season, we must all find creative ways to celebrate safely. We all have the power to collectively bend the curve, and it will take all of us to do so.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for allowing Santa to come this year.

For many Albertan businesses, they do not have the luxury of vast teams of elves to help them make ends meet and fulfill their bottom lines for the year. As 2020 draws to a close and 2021 approaches, Alberta businesses have been dashing through the snow but not laughing all the way. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: what supports are in place to make spirits bright for businesses this Christmas season, and what supports will be in place for a happy new year?

**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. I want to say Merry Christmas to that member. On behalf of our government, when it comes to supports for small businesses, we've done a second round of our relaunch grant, an additional \$5,000 that's available to small businesses that have been impacted by recent health measures. We've also done a tourism levy abatement to help support our tourism industry. That'll be supports of up to about \$10 million over the next three months. We're going to be there for our small businesses, and if further steps are required to support them to get through this pandemic, this government will take action.

### School Re-entry Plan and Education Funding

**Ms Hoffman:** Almost a thousand Alberta schools have sent home notices of COVID-19 cases, and two-thirds of those notices have been sent in the last two weeks. This government chose to spend \$4.7 billion on a handout to profitable corporations instead of acting to limit class sizes to keep students and staff safe. Now hundreds of thousands of students have been forced out of the classroom because the government made a terrible decision. When will the Minister of Education take responsibility and act to reduce close contacts in schools by reducing class sizes?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Education I do want to reiterate that we remain committed to providing students and staff with the resources they need to ensure a safe school year, and I do want to, first and foremost, thank all of the teachers, staff, and administrators, who have done an exceptional job in coming together with school division partners and with the Minister of Education to ensure a safe re-entry back to school. I do want to point out that taxpayers have funded \$10 million in PPE for students and staff, which purchased 1.6 million reusable masks and 466,000 litres of hand sanitizer . . .

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

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the government also cut \$128 million not long before that and given that even after students in grades 7 through 12 have been forced to abandon their classrooms, students in kindergarten through grade 6 continue to get COVID, and given that AHS has abandoned contact tracing for schools and that this work has fallen onto principals and teachers, who are already massively overworked trying to keep students safe, why is the minister forcing Alberta teachers and principals to be health care workers, infectious disease specialists, and educators all at the same time?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that that is not true. In fact, less than a per cent of staff and students have active cases of COVID-19. Students and staff continue to be safe now, as they were in September, in school. Unlike the NDP, who had an outrageous plan that was unrealistic both in terms of space and dollars, we will continue to work with education partners to keep students and staff safe. These new measures are part of a province-wide effort to slow community transmission, as we've said in this House, and the upcoming Christmas break presents an opportunity to do that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the government should know that 998 letters have gone home to parents from various schools throughout

the province saying that there's COVID in schools and given that the Education minister went into hiding from the beginning of this school year as her reckless cuts proved to be unsafe when they started and given that she's hiding from Alberta families once again after hundreds of thousands of students have been forced out of their classrooms by her failure to cap class sizes and limit close contacts, when will the Minister of Education take some responsibility and stand in this place and put the required resources into school budgets and answer for her terrible mistakes?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the one thing that has become evident time and time again is that the members opposite would rather play politics during a pandemic than ask real, transparent questions. The member opposite knows full well, as did the Member for Edmonton-Riverview last week when she asked a similar question of me in this House – they know full well why we are limited to the number of people who are in this place at a time, to adhere to the guidelines put forward and to keep us all safe in this House during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### COVID-19 Outbreaks in Feedlot Operations

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely stunned at the UCP government's incompetence. Their indecisiveness, empty promises, and their total inaction speak volumes. Alberta's beef industry felt the toll of COVID-19 early on in the pandemic. Four workers died at the Cargill and JBS plants in High River and Brooks, and thousands more became sick. To the minister of agriculture. We cannot risk more workers getting sick. Furthermore, you have a duty to keep them safe. You failed at Cargill and JBS. What will you do to address these new outbreaks in Alberta's Feedlot Alley? Please be specific.

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Folks on this side of the House are incredibly proud of our agriculture industry and the cattle and beef industries specifically. We know, firstly, that our large processing plants have put measures in place. They're continuing to operate very safely right now. They're continuing to provide thousands of Albertans job opportunities and continuing to provide high-quality beef products for Albertans and for consumers around the world. I have every confidence in the measures that Alberta's agriculture industry have implemented.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that, Mr. Speaker, my question dealt with feedlot operations, not packing plants, and given that because of new outbreaks in feedlot operations, feedlot operators in Canada are reporting losing \$500,000 per day as they pay to feed and retain cattle that normally would be ready to ship off to slaughterhouses and given that the minister must ensure our food supply is running efficiently and that our status as a world-class supplier of beef must remain intact and given that the outbreaks at Cargill and JBS hurt Alberta's reputation and that it was this minister who claimed that conditions in those plants were safe when clearly they were not, to the minister of agriculture: what specific measures are you providing to feedlot operators . . .

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the measures that tens of thousands of Alberta farmers and ranchers have put in place to slow the spread and stop the spread of COVID in their operations. We know that supply chains were disrupted

earlier this year, and that's why the minister of agriculture implemented the fed cattle set-aside program. That program compensated feedlot producers to set aside cattle that were market ready but couldn't get to market because of the backlog. I have full confidence in the minister to continue to work with the industry.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that this government keeps using the economy as an excuse for their lack of action and given that they don't seem to understand that a healthy economy needs healthy people and given that this government is stripping away worker protections in this legislative sitting through their horrendous Bill 47 and given that this minister doesn't seem to have the answers to my previous questions, to the minister: will you at least push on your colleague, the minister of labour, to withdraw his horrendous legislation to harm workers' rights? It's the least you can do.

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, at a time when this province desperately needs to see job creation, desperately needs to create opportunity for Albertan workers to find jobs, the members opposite attack employers. They did that when they were in office. They raised business taxes by 20 per cent. They brought in egregious labour laws. They did everything to undermine the competitiveness of Alberta employers. We are positioning this province to attract investment, create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

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

#### Federal Fiscal Stabilization and Equalization Programs

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the federal Finance minister presented Canada's fiscal update. Her fiscal update only allocates 20 per cent of the fiscal stabilization that our province was hoping to receive this year. Given that Alberta's current economic downturn is the worst since the '30s, meaning that if Alberta ever needed fiscal stabilization, it would be now, to the Minister of Finance: what is our government doing to respond to the disappointing announcements made last week regarding fiscal stabilization changes?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The modified cap announced by the federal Minister of Finance simply didn't go far enough to correct the problems with the fiscal stabilization program. Premiers from every province and territory have endorsed removal of the caps and applying that retroactively. We call on Ottawa to retroactively remove the caps in compliance with the wishes of all provinces and territories.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's no secret that Alberta needs and requires our PM to advocate on behalf of projects like Keystone and to complete TMX and given that many Albertans feel our economy is under threat by the federal government and that this was highlighted by Trudeau's throne speech, as the Premier said recently, this is not Albertans getting out a begging bowl. We don't look for welfare as a province; we look for fairness. To the same minister: what does fairness look like when it comes to equalization and fiscal stabilization?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The failure of fiscal stabilization to adequately address Alberta's severe revenue losses during the recent recession while the country continued to benefit from Alberta's large net fiscal contributions constitutes a serious failure of fiscal federalism. A fair system of fiscal stabilization would see Alberta receive adequate compensation for the challenges our province has been experiencing with retroactive payments now totalling \$4.6 billion. This is not a large ask given that Alberta has contributed nearly \$100 billion in the last 10 years.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Rick Bell questioned in his recent article on the federal fiscal update, "Will the day come when Alberta is taken seriously and not be brushed off as a colony important only because it ships billions every year to others in Canada?" and given that our province gives about \$20 billion a year more to the rest of Canada than we get back, to the Minister of Finance: how will Alberta make it clear to Ottawa that the fiscal reckoning we face is serious and cannot just be brushed off?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The Fair Deal Panel consulted with Albertans on strategies to secure a fair deal in the federation and advance our vital economic interests. We're proceeding with a number of their recommendations, all of which assert increased independence within Confederation, including holding a referendum on equalization reform. Albertans will have the opportunity to vote on equalization this fall.

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

#### Chief Electoral Officer Investigations

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Late last week we learned that this government has denied the request of the Chief Electoral Officer for a four-month extension of a year-long investigation that we suspect is tied to the UCP leadership contest and kamikaze candidate Jeff Callaway. Now, we've all learned that the former Justice minister and the Premier claim that they didn't want to interfere in investigations, that they respected the independence of the investigations. To the Minister of Justice: why did you not approve an extension for this investigation? What are you hiding, or who are you trying to protect?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer is independent of Alberta's government, completely independent. The government of Alberta provided an extension via ministerial order recognizing the challenges. Elections Alberta was able to adapt to the changes posed by the pandemic, telling a committee just last week that we now have the resources to complete this work.

2:30

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

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given I was asking why the extension wasn't granted and given that attempting to interfere in an investigation is not new for the UCP since they fired the Election Commissioner after he issued over \$200,000 in fines and given that I was relieved to hear the Chief Electoral Officer talk

about how he's redeployed resources to try to get this investigation completed and given it will be of benefit to all Albertans to learn just how deep the corruption goes in the UCP and specifically in the contest that saw this Premier named the victor, will the Justice minister reverse this unjust decision by granting Elections Alberta the extension? Why won't he let the independent investigators investigate?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, it is irresponsible for the NDP to be suggesting that this government is interfering with an independent body's investigation. The blunt truth is that the Chief Electoral Officer has independence and has the resources that he needs to complete this investigation. I'm not going to . . .

**Ms Sweet:** But you denied the extension.

**Mr. Madu:** Yes, we have granted an extension, and I am confident that the Chief Electoral Officer has the resources that he needs to perform his job.

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given I am asking about the extension for the investigation that was requested for four months and given the UCP hasn't shown that they can be trusted when it comes to upholding Alberta's election integrity and laws and given that the UCP has shown that they are not above interfering directly in an investigation to protect themselves or their friends, will the Justice minister commit that he and the entire cabinet will recuse themselves from any interference on any Elections Alberta investigation, or is that too much to ask of this government, to recuse themselves?

**Mr. Madu:** Mr. Speaker, these are the sorts of baseless accusations that we hear from the NDP in this particular House, and that is why they have filed all kinds of baseless allegations with the office of the Ethics Commissioner. I am confident that the Chief Electoral Officer has the time and resources that are needed to complete the investigation, and I will not be lectured to by the members opposite. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

### Family and Gender-based Violence Prevention

**Member Irwin:** Yesterday we mourned as we reflected on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women and the 14 women murdered at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal 31 years ago. Today we must recommit to ending violence in all forms. In Alberta the Family Violence Death Review Committee reviews all incidents of family violence deaths related to intimate partner violence. This is difficult but critical work if we are to learn and to prevent such violence in the future. However, the UCP has not responded to any of the committee reports since it took power in 2019. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: why has your government not responded, and do you plan to respond soon?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to thank the member opposite for the question. I do believe we were both at the same virtual event hosted by the YWCA Edmonton on Friday in support of this very important cause and remembering the lives of the 14 women who were murdered back in 1989. It is a very clear reminder that we need to continue action. When we look at

the Family Violence Death Review Committee, there were 189 family violence related deaths in Alberta between 2008 and 2018. In relation to the member opposite's specific question, I am happy to get that specific answer and get back.

**Member Irwin:** The UCP has repeatedly stated that taking action on violence is a priority. They passed Clare's law, which allows people at risk to find out if their intimate partner has a history of domestic violence. We supported this bill but with the caveat that without resources in place for women leaving abusive situations like safe and affordable housing and access to affordable child care, the legislation is meaningless. Given that COVID has highlighted just how critical these supports are, to the minister of status of women: what actions have you taken to advocate for these supports? Can you also give us an update on the Clare's law regulations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I do want to thank the member because this is an important question. In fact, as the member opposite stated, we did recently pass Alberta's version of Clare's law to help people make informed choices about potentially harmful relationships. We continue to work with community partners to make sure those that are experiencing domestic violence have access to services and supports to help them rebuild their lives. Specifically to Budget 2020 this government provided \$53.1 million to women's emergency shelters, and we continue to provide additional funding.

**Member Irwin:** Given that we know that violence against women disproportionately impacts racialized women and, in particular, indigenous women and given that we know that we cannot truly make progress on gender-based violence if we do not acknowledge the systemic racism and the historic and current barriers that indigenous people face and given that it's now been 18 months since the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two spirit people, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: where is your government at with implementing the calls for justice contained in the report? Please be specific.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, we do continue to remain invested in protecting vulnerable Albertans in all communities, and that includes within indigenous communities here in Alberta. We continue to take action by providing funding to shelters such as the Ermineskin Women's Shelter and the Awo Taan Healing Lodge to support indigenous women and children fleeing family violence and abuse. Our partnership with Métis settlements, through our family and community support services program, also provides funding for preventative social services programs, including programs that promote healthy relationships.

I want to thank the member opposite for the very important questions today.

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

### COVID-19 and Small-business Restrictions

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has had to take extraordinary steps in the last couple of weeks when we imposed strict measures to close down recreational facilities and dance studios to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We have since changed these restrictions and will now allow dance studios to have individual studio time and training, and recreational facilities may

operate at a reduced capacity. But some businesses such as indoor play centres are not allowed to operate even at reduced capacity. To the Minister of Health: why has our government reduced restrictions for some businesses but left others closed down?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we know that businesses have worked hard throughout the pandemic to follow the guidance in place and to protect their patrons and their staff. We made the decision to close specific businesses, these that presented the greatest risk to people from different households congregating and transmitting COVID. While they are allowed to remain open, dance studios and fitness centres must follow strict rules to prevent people gathering. Indoor play centres involve widespread mixing and mingling of many individuals from various households. We are monitoring the situation closely and will take additional steps if and when needed.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that small businesses and restaurants across my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain have reduced-capacity restrictions and given that these restrictions can potentially reduce profits for these businesses at a time when they are struggling and worried about going out of business, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: what supports are we providing to small businesses and restaurants to help them weather this pandemic and the imposed restrictions?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you to the member, and thank you for that question. You know what? We thank the small businesses across Alberta that have done everything possible to stay open, Mr. Speaker, to keep people employed in their communities. We encourage all Albertans to support their local businesses, support their local restaurants, takeout, whatever you can do to support those businesses and keep them functioning. For supports we've done a second part, a second tranche of our relaunch grant, another \$5,000 for small businesses that have been impacted by recent health orders. We're going to continue to listen to small businesses, and if further steps are required, we'll take action.

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

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've spoken to many constituents in my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain who are concerned that we are leaving casinos open yet closing schools early and given that many of these concerns are coming from constituents who think that we are putting the priorities of large businesses above our children's education and mental health, to the Minister of Health: can you please explain the rationale for why casinos have been left open while schools are being closed early and the holiday break extended?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are very different locations with unique challenges in limiting the spread of COVID. While we have been able to manage COVID in our schools well, quarantine and health requirements have affected staffing, which in turn has placed challenges on the quality of learning. This is why we shifted some students to at-home learning. The safety and the well-being of our staff and students continues to be our number one priority. We continue to closely watch the situation, and we will take additional action as required.

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

### Educational Curriculum Review and Redesign

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the election we committed to pausing the NDP's closed-door curriculum review, a promise to be open and transparent about the renewing of the kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum. Recently Alberta Education published a website that furthers this commitment to transparency. In a recent column David Staples wrote, "We've never before had this level of transparency and accountability with the curriculum." Can the Minister of Education explain what information can be found on this new website?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We made a commitment to Albertans to be open and transparent about the curriculum development process, and we are delivering on that promise. The Department of Education has published a website where Albertans can find detailed information about the review process, how curriculum is being developed, and who is working on it. Once the members of the curriculum working group have been selected – I believe many of them have been – their names will be published on this website. I do encourage all interested Albertans to go to [alberta.ca/curriculum-development](http://alberta.ca/curriculum-development) to learn more.

**2:40**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Minister. Given that the NDP believe that radical groups like Extinction Rebellion should be in our classrooms shaming many students' parents that work in our energy industry both in my constituency and across Alberta and given that the members opposite believe that one of the goals of the curriculum should be to turn students into effective agents of change and given that the NDP refused to disclose who was working on their curriculum, to the minister: can you please explain the benefit of having a transparent curriculum website?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the members opposite were in government, they worked tirelessly to hide the membership of their curriculum working groups from the public. Albertans elected us to pause those closed-door secretive curriculum reviews, and that is exactly what we're doing. We committed to taking ideology out of the classroom, not putting it in. Recently an *Edmonton Journal* column stated that "this level of transparency is a critical improvement," and we will continue to be transparent with Albertans.

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the K to 12 curriculum is an important topic to Albertans and the future of our province and given that despite the challenges of COVID-19 Alberta Education is moving forward with renewing the curriculum, as we promised during the election, to the minister: can you please explain to the House what the next steps are in the curriculum review and when Albertans can expect to see a draft K through 6 curriculum?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to provide a response on behalf of our colleague the Minister of Education. The K to 6 curriculum is being refined to align with the ministerial order on student learning that was released back in August. This week the draft K to 6 curriculum will go forward to

the curriculum working groups, which will consist solely of teachers, for further review and refinement. We'll also begin engaging with academics and education system partners in this work, and most importantly, in early 2021 we'll be releasing the draft for public input so parents and all Albertans can review it prior to piloting in September 2021.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

#### Enbridge Line 3 Pipeline Final Permit Approval

**Ms Fir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak about the final permit approval for Enbridge Energy's line 3 pipeline. This is a huge milestone for this province and the hard-working Albertans that the oil and gas industry employs. Now more than ever the world needs oil and gas from Alberta. Alberta produces the most ethical oil and gas in the world, and that is something everyone in this country should want more of.

Mr. Speaker, there were several reasons I decided to run to represent the constituents of Calgary-Peigan, and one of the biggest reasons was my dismay at the complete lack of support the at the time NDP government had for pipelines and for Alberta's oil and gas industry. I spent almost 20 years of my career in the oil and gas industry, and I am so proud to have worked in an industry that has the highest standards in the world for clean, safe, ethical operations, reclamation, and human rights standards, and this party would champion that.

The truth, Mr. Speaker, is that we could not live in a world without oil and gas. It is one of the largest industries in the country and the most ethically produced in the world.

The Enbridge line 3 approval means that once capacity returns to 760,000 barrels a day, our province's takeaway capacity will increase by 370,000 barrels per day. Given that the current pipeline was built in the 1960s, it reportedly is only pushing half of its original capacity. Alberta has and will always be a stable, secure, and responsible energy provider to our neighbouring countries, and this project will continue that. I am exceedingly proud of this industry, and I cannot wait to see the many benefits this project will bring to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** Are you providing a notice of motion?

**Ms Glasgo:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** I rise to give oral notice of private member's Bill 211, sponsored by myself, entitled the Municipal Government (Firearms) Amendment Act, 2020.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy and Deputy Government House Leader has an oral notice.

**Mrs. Savage:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of eight government motions, all sponsored by the Minister of Environment and Parks. First is Government Motion 53.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 35, Tax Statutes (Creating Jobs and Driving Innovation) Amendment Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 54:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 35, Tax Statutes (Creating Jobs and Driving Innovation) Amendment Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 55:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 46, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 56:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 46, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 57:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 47, Ensuring Safety and Cutting Red Tape Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 58:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 47, Ensuring Safety and Cutting Red Tape Act, 2020, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

**Government Motion 59:**

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 48, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Finally, I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 60.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 48, Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (No. 2), is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 209

#### Cost of Public Services Transparency Act

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill, Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act.

Mr. Speaker, the MacKinnon report found that Alberta has one of the highest per capita costs of public services in Canada. This high-cost structure has resulted in multibillion-dollar structural deficits, threatening these services, including for our children.



Mr. Speaker, this bill provides transparency for Albertans on the per capita costs of key public services such as health care, education, and municipal operating expenses. This bill will increase taxpayer literacy, and increased taxpayer literacy will result in greater accountability for public service providers and their governments. In these challenging times Alberta families and individuals want to trust that their government institutions are spending their money carefully and respectfully. This bill will help build trust.

In closing, I invite my friends in our government to adopt the principles and concepts in this bill in a shared desire to serve as careful and respectful stewards of taxpayer dollars, striving for a selfless culture of excellence, accountable to serve the public interest.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

## 2:50      **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to table the requisite number of copies of a series of tweets by Dr. Darren Markland, who, as many folks in this Chamber know, is an ICU doctor doing incredible work and very much raising the concerns of health care workers across this province, who we stand with and will continue to fight for. Thank you, Dr. Markland.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose in this House a day or two ago to advise of procedures taking place in long-term care centres whereby the sewage water would be tested to confirm there were outbreaks of COVID-19. There are two articles, and I have the requisite number of each article to table.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, hon. members, that brings us to Ordres du jour.

## **Orders of the Day**

### **Motions for Returns**

#### **Medical Device Reprocessing**

M8. Mr. Shepherd moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all reports received by the Ministry of Health from Alberta Health Services between May 1, 2019, and October 19, 2020, relating to medical device reprocessing.

[Debate adjourned November 30: Mr. Sabir speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has four minutes remaining should he choose to do so.

Having not seen him having the desire to do so, the hon. member was closing debate. As such, I am prepared to call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:53 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Renaud	Schmidt
Feehan	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Hunter	Rehn
Ellis	Issik	Rosin
Fir	Loewen	Savage
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Neudorf	Turton
Goodridge	Panda	

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 17
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[Motion for a Return 8 lost]

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

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections and Diseases**

M9. Mr. Dach moved on behalf of Mr. Shepherd that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all surveillance reports prepared by the Ministry of Health between May 1, 2014, and October 19, 2020, relating to the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and diseases in Alberta.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Motion for a Return 9. I speak of a very serious public health matter when I bring forward Motion for a Return 9, something that is very germane to the conversations around Alberta today as we are immersed in the battle against COVID-19. During that battle other issues have of course gone below the surface, and one public conversation that we have had ongoing and which I would like by this motion for a return to bring closer to the surface and engage Albertans in is the debate and discussion over sexually transmitted diseases, in particular the infectious syphilis incidence in the province.

3:10

It really hasn't been widely reported this year, perhaps, as I mentioned, due to COVID-19 and the ongoing opioid crisis, but Alberta has seen a very significant rise in sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and it's a serious, serious public health matter. It is not only for those populations which are most pointedly part of the outbreaks and the incidence of the disease, but of course diseases are not discriminatory, Madam Speaker. It's a pan-Alberta public health issue, so everybody shares this concern about the rise of infectious syphilis in Alberta, and this serious public health issue needs to be taken seriously.

The reason for this Motion for a Return 9: one of them is, of course, the dissemination of information and the revelation of the data around the infectious outbreak of infectious syphilis in the province because, Madam Speaker, without data we cannot have a proper public debate. There is no proper public discussion of this serious public health issue, and it has seen a significant rise over the last three years in Alberta. We have seen spikes of syphilis like this before, most recently in 2008, and very tragically some very serious consequences, especially for babies born with congenital syphilis, arise. It's a tragedy when this happens. I'll spare the House the details, but suffice it to say that the disease itself is awful, and it can be deadly.

It's also worth noting that the Conservative government in 2008 attempted to cover up that outbreak, which led to the resignation of the chief medical officer of health at the time, Dr. Karen Grimsrud, so it begs the question that we should be looking at the motion here

for a return and the data that it will bring forward so that we're very, very cognizant of past practices by the chief medical officer of health at the time, in 2008, who saw fit to hide data to cover up a deadly outbreak of infectious syphilis in 2008. Motion for a Return 9, that I am bringing forward today on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, asks us to make sure that all possible public information is brought to light so that the consequences of this outbreak are widely known to the public and that the public is behind every effort that the government should be making to ensure that these outbreaks are dealt with in a most expeditious manner involving education, in particular, Madam Speaker, education targeting those who are most affected by the outbreaks but also keeping in mind that the outbreaks are subject to the possibility of affecting all of us.

Any time we have an infectious disease that is a threat to the lives of particular groups of Albertans, we know for a fact that it can break out of those particular population sectors into the wider population as well. So it's incumbent upon us to make sure we look at the data, read it correctly, and notwithstanding that it may be a taboo subject or a matter that certain populations don't want to talk about, it must be brought forward, and it must be discussed openly with a view to ensuring that surveillance reports showing documents and trends that go back to 2014, that we are asking for, allow us to paint the picture of the trends of the epidemiology of this insidious infection and this public health threat to all of us. As I said before, Madam Speaker, without data we can have no debate, no proper discussion, no proper demand for government action to halt the spread of this horrific infectious syphilis disease.

Now, I'm aware that there are two annual reports, Madam Speaker, available through the open government website, the 2019 and 2020 editions. Notwithstanding that, what we are seeking are the earlier reports and any documents that have been produced so far that include 2020 data. To reiterate, we're looking for "copies of all surveillance reports prepared by the Ministry of Health between May 1, 2014, and October 19, 2020, relating to the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and diseases in Alberta."

We specifically want to see those trends, from the earlier time frame moving forward to the current, for the opportunity to really clearly see the picture of the trends and the epidemiology of infectious syphilis in the province of Alberta. The seriousness of this is sometimes lost as many other things seem to get buried under the fight that we're in to combat COVID-19 in this province, yet we still need to keep an eye on other elements of public health that deserve our attention. This is one of them, Madam Speaker. It's the public debate, public awareness, and the encouragement to the government to have us as Albertans fully comprehend the outbreak that we've seen, to be willing to discuss about it openly, without shame or fear or embarrassment. It is a public health issue; it's not a blame issue. We need an open dialogue about this common threat to significant portions of our Alberta population and to the people, indeed, who may end up being pregnant and carrying this disease. Those women possibly will end up bearing children who are born with congenital syphilis. That is something we desperately want to avoid.

Those populations who are at greatest risk can be identified by using the data that we are seeking under Motion for a Return 9. That data will therefore inform the public debate and allow us to target public health measures and supports, should the government see their way clear to following through, which I hope they will given the data before us that we are hoping to bring to light as a result of Motion for a Return 9, and make sure that those who are most affected by this outbreak and incidence of syphilis in our province are targeted as far as their public health is concerned and their health

and treatment are concerned but also to have the general public made widely aware as to the ultimate risk that we all face when a public threat of a disease such as syphilis is not dealt with properly.

We need to know the data behind it. As I said before, the disease does not discriminate; everyone is potentially at risk. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to ensure that the public is made widely aware of the risk that this insidious disease presents to us. Anyone could potentially be a victim of it. I'm sure that we all share the hope that this disease can be eliminated. We have done that with other diseases in the past in this province, Madam Speaker, and it's something that is my sincere hope that we can do with syphilis. It's something that is within our grasp, and with the right public health measures, with the right data, with the right targeting, with the right focus, and with the will of this government to make that a priority, this insidious disease can become a thing of the past or at least be made to be dwindled to the smallest possible numbers, and we will avoid seeing the spikes that we have seen in the most recent past of this disease.

With that, I move Motion for a Return 9 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre and respectfully ask for the support of other members of this Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak to Motion for a Return 9, that had been moved by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. The motion is as follows:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all surveillance reports prepared by the Ministry of Health between May 1, 2014, and October 19, 2020, relating to the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and diseases in Alberta.

3:20

I'm a little curious as to why the members opposite would choose to bring forward this motion, especially knowing that this information is actually publicly available online. The member will be pleased to know that this information can easily be accessed by taking the following steps: visit [alberta.ca](http://alberta.ca), then click on the drop-down menu All Services and select Health. Once you're on the Health page, you can select Health Data, Research and Standards, and then you click on the Interactive Health Data page, which describes health data and statistics on various health topics: demographics, mortality, diseases, and more in data table, dashboard, or map formats. I think this is really important, and it's great to see the Ministry of Health having so much information so readily available, because sexually transmitted infections and diseases are a very important thing to study so that people can be prepared. The interactive health data application, or the IHDA, website has all of the information that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is looking for and, actually, I would assume, a lot more.

Madam Speaker, I find it really confusing that the member would seek to direct the Ministry of Health to obtain this information that they could very easily access themselves. This would undoubtedly be a very poor use of government resources. It would also duplicate efforts that the ministry has already undertaken to provide health data and statistics not only to the members opposite but to all Albertans and, like I said before, information that is so easily accessible and available at our fingertips.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the NDP is asking for six years' worth of data from the Ministry of Health, beginning in May 2014 all the way through till October 2020. Again, as I've said, this information is already available online although I do find it odd that they want records that date back to the time when they were in

government, from 2015 to 2019. Perhaps the members opposite or the Member for Edmonton–City Centre can shed some light as to why they are looking for information from back when they were in government. I would argue that Motion for a Return 9 would have been a poor use of government resources even long before the pandemic hit this province. However, given the enormous pressure on the Ministry of Health as they work to address COVID-19, this request seems even more unreasonable. I'm sure members opposite would agree that the ministry's time could be much better spent working on Alberta's pandemic response.

The reason we're against this motion for a return is that the information is already so readily and easily accessible through the interactive health data application website – and I gave a brief description as to how everybody that is tuning in here today or in this Chamber can look at all of that health data – and the data contains a variety of information on the health status and determinations of health. You can find information such as demographics, mortality, and chronic diseases generally. You can also find information that the Member for Edmonton–City Centre is looking for on infectious diseases within our province. In fact, you can even break the information down by region, which I found really interesting when I picked up the website. You can look at it in our five different health zones in Alberta: south, Calgary, central, Edmonton, and north zones. It can also be broken down by age groups, year, and different types of diseases. Information is also available annually, as I mentioned, or quarterly. The annual reporting allows you to access data as far back as 2000.

Again, Madam Speaker, what I'm describing here is the excellent work that's being done by the officials in the Ministry of Health and all that they have done to make health information accessible to not just those in this Chamber but to all Albertans. The detailed information is available online and can be accessed quite easily. I did it, actually, before coming into this Chamber. This type of data is incredibly important to ensure that we can identify and understand trends, better respond to the health needs of Albertans.

I would strongly urge all members of this Assembly to vote against this because, as I said, it would be a very poor use of government resources given that this information is publicly available. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Motion for a Return 9? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne–Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just unmasking here so we can take care of this very important business, Motion for a Return 9. As my colleague from Fort McMurray–Lac La Biche, who just spoke, I too am opposed, against this. I believe a better allocation of resources can be served by the House and by the department working on the pressing needs and the items that we have.

I do also find it interesting, though, that the Member for Edmonton–City Centre is asking for records that were available during their time. If he's looking for items prior to when we were elected, obviously the website is available, as my colleague pointed out. Also, there was another member, the Member for Edmonton–Glenora. I believe she was actually the Health minister at that time. It might have been beneficial to bump into her in the hallway and have that discussion.

I will, though, for the edification and for the record and for the folks out there that are watching at home and for those on the opposition side that are still with us in the Chamber – there is a site. It's [www.ahw.gov.ab.ca/IHDA\\_Retrieval/](http://www.ahw.gov.ab.ca/IHDA_Retrieval/). Again, I believe that if

you go back to that site, you should be able to find the information that you're looking for there.

With that, Madam Speaker, I encourage all MLAs to vote against this motion for a return since the information is readily available and the Health minister, his department, is obviously really busy with more important matters at this time. Not that the issue isn't important, but the access to information is readily available.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate on Motion for a Return 9?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 9 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Feehan	Sabir	Schmidt
Renaud		

Against the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Goodridge	Rehn
Ellis	Issik	Savage
Fir	Loewen	Singh
Getson	Long	Turton
Glasgo	Neudorf	Wilson

Totals:	For – 4	Against – 15
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[Motion for a Return 9 lost]

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

#### Screen-based Production Grant

M10. Ms Renaud moved on behalf of Ms Goehring that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of screen-based production grant recipients and the total dollar amount approved for those grants in the fiscal year 2018-2019, broken down by fiscal quarter.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Motion for a Return 10 on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton–Castle Downs.

In the beginning of the budget the minister claimed that their new program would be beneficial to the sector, yet throughout estimates in the fall of 2019 we heard from the sector that the new program was lacking. I think that particularly the Member for Edmonton–Castle Downs has, through member's statements and questions in this Chamber, highlighted the need for additional information. This is an opportunity for the government, in my opinion, to provide a baseline for the effectiveness and impact of the previous program for a comparison with the new program.

Now, it is one thing to stop an old program and introduce a new one, but it's quite another to evaluate its success, so like any good baseline, it would be helpful to see that information compared. This information is something that we would expect the government to have prepared for the purposes of measuring the effectiveness of a new program and tweaking if necessary. Now, I understand that this particular government isn't frequently or very often willing to admit that things could have been done a little better or that mistakes were made, but I think that in the spirit of wanting to make things as

effective as possible, government could realize that doing this work would ultimately benefit Albertans.

I know that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has done a lot of work around consultation, and when artists were consulted on this policy even before the pandemic, they informed us that the new program was indeed flawed. We are simply looking for the provision of information on the previous program in the same manner that we would expect it to be provided for the department and minister's consideration. I think this would be one more step. I think we certainly provided a number of different motions that would allow the government an opportunity to demonstrate some goodwill and transparency. If indeed they are committed to open dialogue with Albertans and sharing data that is current, that is accurate to demonstrate why they believe that going in one direction is better than another, then by all means I think this information would highlight that or would certainly support their position at the very least.

As I'm sure that we're all in support of ensuring support for this sector in the most effective manner possible, I encourage all members to vote in favour of this motion. I would just like to add that I think that as the pandemic has worn on, month after month, we've certainly seen maybe not what we anticipated at the start, but we've certainly seen the number of sectors that have been just devastated, actually, because of, well, the different actions that have been required to try to mitigate some of this. Certainly, this industry has really taken a beating, just the very nature of the way that performances are done and the way people gather to do this kind of work. I think this would go a long way to not only reassure people that this is a better way to go – and here is the proof; here is the data – but it would also demonstrate a commitment to this sector to provide clear, transparent, accurate, and current information.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will urge all members of this House to vote in support of this motion for a return. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join the debate on Motion for a Return 10? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to Motion for a Return 10, "that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a list of screen-based production grant recipients and the total dollar amount approved for those grants in the fiscal year 2018-2019, broken down by fiscal quarter."

Now, this morning I took a quick look at the screen-based production grant web page, which, for reference, is on [www.alberta.ca/screen-based-production-grant](http://www.alberta.ca/screen-based-production-grant), and on that web page there's quite a bit of information regarding this grant, who's eligible, and how to apply. The screen-based production grant, under the Alberta media fund, supports the growth, sustainability, competitiveness, and business attraction of Alberta's screen-based production industry. This grant strives to accomplish this by promoting economic diversification and investment in this very important sector. It also helps develop industry professionals and to create jobs. Our film industry is expanding, and through investments such as the screen-based production grant we are harnessing growing international interest in Alberta's film industry. This attracts investment and job creators from all over the world, and this is essential to supporting our local film companies, who are creating Alberta content, which I know many of us enjoy on TV.

Now, Madam Speaker, there's plenty of information publicly available online on the screen-based production grant web page. That includes the information that the member is looking for. If it's already available online, I would ask: why would we use additional

government and department resources to do the research for the member opposite in a similar manner that members of the public can access already? If the member opposite would like to find information, I encourage the member to check out the previous grant recipient database. There the member and all members of the public and all Albertans can find all the data on who received grants, how much funding a group received, and I would even suggest that it would not be so hard to find the total dollar amount given out under the screen-based production grant.

**3:50**

Now, in all seriousness, how can the opposition think it reasonable that taxpayer-funded civil servants take significant time out of their already busy days to use resources to compile a list of information that is already publicly available and readily accessible? The time of department officials would be much better spent focusing on Alberta's pandemic response and our economic recovery, which I think all members in this House deem to be of the utmost importance.

Now, Madam Speaker, the screen-based production grant is a part of that economic recovery, and if the members opposite took a look at the previous grant recipient database, they would see that this grant is a part of supporting the film industry to diversify and recover our economy. We need our department staff to be part of this strategy to get Alberta back on track. We need them to be working with our partners in the industry, to be processing those applications, answering questions from applicants in the sector, and not answering the questions from opposite members, who have the ability to do the work themselves. I encourage the opposition to take a look at the previous grant recipient database and find the information about the screen-based production grant. It isn't hard, and doing it yourselves saves resources and time for department officials, who are focused, dealing with the real, present issues facing everyday Albertans.

Again, Madam Speaker, I want to reiterate that this motion is asking for information that is already readily accessible online. Time, energy, and resources have already gone into this and making sure that this information is accessible to the public. The previous grant recipient database is readily accessible for the members opposite to find the information that they are looking for, and I welcome them to do so. Duplicating the ministry's efforts to compile this information would be a poor use of time and resources, time and resources that would be better spent focusing on Alberta's pandemic response and economic recovery.

Madam Speaker, I've outlined here the reasons why I oppose this motion, and I encourage all members of this House to vote this down. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are any other members wishing to join debate on Motion for a Return 10?

Seeing none, would the hon. member like to close debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and close debate on Motion for a Return 10 on behalf of my colleague for Edmonton-Castle Downs. Although I appreciate the response from the member opposite about, "You know, all the information is there if you just go look for it," yeah, I'm having some difficulty finding that.

However, I think the point is that to have an accurate comparison from one program to the next, from one fiscal year to the next, it requires a little bit of time to pull together, and to suggest that Albertans just, you know, search the database or search various websites – what we're asking for is just clear, transparent information so that Albertans can rest assured that when the

government says, “Here’s what we’re doing; it’s an improvement on what was done before; it’ll sort of trigger this much economic activity,” that, in fact, is based on accurate information and data. Instead of trying to brush the request away, as continues to happen this afternoon, I would suggest that members opposite consider the motion for what it is, and that’s an attempt to provide clear, transparent information to Albertans, who have, you know, really lost a lot of trust and faith in this particular government. Perhaps use this as an opportunity to share information instead of hiding.

Thank you. With that, I urge my colleagues to vote for the motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Renaud	Schmidt
Feehan	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Ellis	Issik	Rehn
Fir	Loewen	Savage
Getson	Long	Singh
Glasgo	Lovely	Turton
Goodridge	Neudorf	Wilson

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 15
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[Motion for a Return 10 lost]

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

#### 4:10 Corporate Tax Reduction

M11. Mr. Schmidt moved on behalf of Ms Phillips that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including tables and graphs, prepared between April 16, 2019, and August 15, 2019, containing or relating to the projections and forecasts used by the government to determine the effect of the corporate tax reduction on government revenue.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to offer some arguments that I’m sure the members from the UCP backbenches will find incredibly convincing, and I look forward to them voting in favour of this motion after I lay out a compelling and irrefutable argument.

Now, we know from freedom of information requests that the civil service was far less optimistic about the job impacts of the \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway than members of Executive Council were during the election campaign and certainly in their comments with respect to passing that legislation in the House. Of course, we don’t need to remind everybody that in the fiscal plan introduced in 2019, on page 144 it says clearly that the corporate giveaway would cost Albertans \$4.7 billion, yet cabinet ministers have tried to deny it.

Now, by voting in favour of this motion, of course, members of the House can hold members of Executive Council and specifically the Minister of Finance accountable for the words that he’s said in this House with respect to the corporate tax cuts. Now, I don’t need to remind members that the Minister of Finance and members of Executive Council have a little bit of a credibility deficit when it

comes to stating numbers that are true with respect to their fiscal plans.

I look back to the fiscal plan that was introduced in 2019. Of course, we all remember that that was introduced in October 2019. That included this corporate giveaway, but it also included some deficit projections. At that time I think the deficit that the government was projecting was on the order of \$8 billion, pretty significant, yet only five months later, in March, we see the, of course, year-end. We didn’t actually see that until much later in the year because, of course, the government doesn’t usually produce its annual reports until the end of June. For excuses related to the pandemic the government committed to delaying that accountability to later in the year, but when we finally got the numbers from the government with respect to its deficit, of course, the deficit had ballooned to \$12 billion. They only missed it by 50 per cent, Madam Speaker. Based on that track record alone, of course, I think it’s natural to have some questions for the Minister of Finance when he makes statements regarding the accuracy of numbers in this House.

With respect to deficit projections, of course, the 2019-2020 fiscal year wasn’t the only one where deficit projections exploded. Of course, we see the same thing happening with the 2020-2021 budget. The initial deficit that the government introduced was much lower, on the order of, again, half of what we see the projected deficit being this year; \$21 billion now is the projection, I think. The initial projection that the government brought forward in the second round of the budget that they brought forward – of course, because of COVID they had to revise those numbers and then significantly alter the standing orders of the Legislature so that they could pass that in a quick manner. Anyway, I think they had projected originally \$10 billion. Now it’s up to \$21 billion, and we can’t get a straight answer as to where that money is going.

We can’t get a straight answer with respect to how much the people of Alberta are on the hook for with respect to the Keystone XL pipeline. The Minister of Energy and the Premier and the Minister of Finance, we’ve asked them all on a number of occasions: how much will the people of Alberta be expected to pay if that project doesn’t go through, which is likely now that President-elect Biden is set to take the White House on January 20? No answers, Madam Speaker. So it’s natural for us to have some misgivings when it comes to the statements that we hear from the Finance minister and the Premier and other members of Executive Council with regard to the cost of particular initiatives.

Now, from the economic data that we have collected that has been made public since this government first introduced its poorly thought out corporate giveaway, it shows that it hasn’t worked, Madam Speaker. Now, the government wants to blame all of the things that are happening in Alberta right now with respect to the economy on COVID, but I think it serves us all well to remind everybody that even prior to the pandemic Alberta lost 50,000 jobs and the economy shrank by .6 per cent. That was well before the coronavirus began to pose a serious threat to the people of Alberta. Based on that data alone, of course, we are curious to see what the government has to say with respect to the efficacy of these tax cuts, these tax giveaways that the government seems to be intent on ramming through.

Now, we’ve heard, of course, some of the arguments that have been put forward by members of, you know, the UCP backbenches, dutifully doing the work of their masters in Executive Council, arguing for some reason against transparency, Madam Speaker. It is incredibly upsetting to me to have this old canard trotted out all the time that we couldn’t possibly – the civil service is so busy that they couldn’t possibly spend the time it takes to gather the data that was needed to provide this information that is in the public interest.

Of course, every time they make that argument, they fail to recognize that there are staff whose sole job is to respond to these requests, Madam Speaker, so it's not as if we're going to be taking nurses out of COVID units to be collecting this kind of information. We're not going to be pulling doctors off the streets to collect documents from the Finance minister's office to examine the efficacy of a \$4.7 billion corporate handout. That doesn't hold any water, and I look forward to members of the UCP backbenches, hopefully, amending their speaking notes so that we don't have to listen to that tired argument again this afternoon.

Now, perhaps the members opposite will say that, you know – the member, my friend from Lethbridge-West, did actually get the FOIP documents. I don't need to remind everybody that that was four blank pages. We could actually see what was written on these four pages if this motion for a return were voted in favour of. It's well within the authority of cabinet to waive cabinet confidentiality if that's what's preventing the release of this information. I encourage them to do so, Madam Speaker, because the people of Alberta will want to see: what was the evidence and data on which the government made this decision to give away \$4.7 billion to the most profitable corporations in Alberta? What informed that decision?

4:20

Certainly, in these days the people of Alberta are asking a lot of legitimate questions about the data and the evidence that members of Executive Council are using to make any of their decisions. In fact, members of their own civil service are so concerned about this Executive Council's refusal to look at the evidence and data to make decisions that they're leaking confidential cabinet discussions to the public to show how bad the situation is, how ideologically driven and so closed to the idea of data that . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to Motion for a Return 11? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you so much, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Honestly, I haven't had my dose of tall tales and revisionist history for some time, and I had to take the mask off. I would put some earplugs in to filter some of that out, but I'd really like to hear that solid story. Just stick to it, partner. Your speaking points haven't missed a beat yet.

When he isn't up in Zama Lakes talking about how the mosquitoes are so thick that he can't see the man standing next to him for all that thickness of mosquitoes, it might have been something else that was thick up in Zama Lakes that the member might have been stepping in. When he isn't talking about what's happening to parks, when he isn't scaring people about this scare or that scare or the health scare or this thing, he likes to jump to other points, which are his speaking points. He wanted a member from this side to not use speaking points. You got your wish.

The other thing that I'd like to talk about here, Madam Speaker, on MR 11: well, unlike the NDP, we didn't take nine months to form government. We actually started getting to work right away. We actually had a plan that if we did get voted in, we'd actually go to work right away.

Now, back in the day, before COVID had hit – this is back in 2019 – I got an e-mail. I hear the disdain coming from that member's voice all the time when it comes to backbenchers and what our roles are. Well, it was difficult for me to understand what that is and how much disdain that member really has in being a former cabinet minister until I looked at an e-mail from Robyn Luff. Well, she explains to us as new backbenchers how they were treated

as NDP backbenchers. They literally had no voice. You can rest assured, Madam Speaker, that this government listens to us backbenchers. We're called private members, private members that get included in lots of conversations here on this floor, and we get involved with the government.

I'm going to get back to the point here because I'm sure the member opposite from Edmonton-Gold Bar is going to light his hair on fire or maybe go through all those thick mosquitoes up in Zama, so I'll get back over to this.

I'd like to rise today in opposition to Motion for a Return 11. Our government is committed to working with Alberta businesses to ensure they are contributing to our economy in the best way possible. Following up on promises made during our campaign last year, we pledged on the general income tax that we'd cut that to help stimulate the economy. Well, again, Madam Speaker, it may seem an old phrase: we don't make promises we can't keep. Circumstances may change along the way, but this hasn't changed. The tax rates went up. We've got to lower them down to be more competitive than these jurisdictions.

When we inherited this, it was a fiscal mess, and Albertans wanted a change, Madam Speaker, so that's why we're carrying on with this. Like I mentioned before, rather than taking nine months to actually form government, we were in there right away working from day one, and one of those items was to reduce that tax rate down to 8 per cent. Again, last April our government did all the necessary background work for that change. We implemented it in a timely manner.

For the information of the Member for Lethbridge-West, who had introduced this motion, and obviously the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, there are other avenues to get this information other than through a motion for a return. In other words, Madam Speaker, this would be incredibly time consuming. Unlike that member saying that all these people are just sitting there waiting for their questions to come in, they're actually doing other work. It's not busywork. It's not like they're just sitting around waiting for questions to come in, that that's their only job. Trust me; in this government people are actually working. They're not just looking around at each other. Quite frankly, the bureaucracy loves it because busy hands – they're getting back to work doing the government's business and the business of the people. [interjections] I feel like Happy Gilmore. I just want him to heckle a little bit more so that I can catch more. It gives me vim and vigour to keep going.

As it stands, Alberta is still dealing with the repercussions of COVID-19, the pandemic in our province, and our economy. The requests that this side has brought up in this matter require a significant amount of time and resources for the department to compile. This is time much better spent focusing on pandemic response and our recovery. The aptly named job-creation tax cut put forth by our government last year is an investment in Alberta's future. As I've said before, you can't tax your way to prosperity. By reducing that corporate income tax rate from 12 to 10 per cent in January of this year and then down from 10 to 8 per cent in July of this year, we're creating an environment for businesses to create jobs, boost production, and it will help rebuild our economy.

Now, this tax cut is not a handout to corporations because you can't give something back that you haven't collected yet, Madam Speaker. I know you understand that, and I'm going to say that again. You can't collect a big sum of money on something when you haven't taxed it in the first place because it hasn't been generated. When you drive out business and you drive down that economy, you can put it at 100 per cent tax, but if you have zero to collect, there's nothing there. Simple, simple. I know they'll call

that trickle-down economics, but I can't speak freaky-deaky socialist to get a translation.

Now, this tax cut is not a handout, as I mentioned. It's to reduce some of those burdens, and it's to help create the jobs. We want to make Alberta one of the most tax-competitive jurisdictions in North America, as the job-creation tax cut does. It creates more jobs for Albertans, better revenue for industry, and, in turn, Madam Speaker, a stronger economy. A study by the University of Calgary School of Public Policy shows that for every dollar increase in corporate tax revenue due to a rate increase, aggregate wages in Alberta declined by at least 95 per cent. In other words, taxing high amounts means lower wages for Albertan workers. Oil field jobs are not the same as flipping burgers. Let's let that sink in a bit. You ran out 180,000 people so you could make people come from Ontario and change light bulbs. It wasn't the right economics that we wanted to follow in the province.

This is not a threat by corporations. This is not a tactic by corporations. This is a fact. If there is less money coming into businesses, there will be less money flowing out. Pretty basic stuff. From that explanation I hope that one thing is clear: our government cares about Albertans. That's why we're here. Most of us left our normal lives so we could step in and fill the tide, to fill the void and the issues that the Albertans were having because of that last group. Again, to all the Albertans out there watching, we're going to keep doing our job. We're going to keep moving the ball downfield, and we're going to fix those mistakes despite the rhetoric and all the noise that the opposition may make and the hair waving and the gnashing of the teeth, et cetera, or, you know, pointing out these other scares that don't exist.

By reducing those taxes, we're facilitating a stronger economic landscape that allows businesses to grow, create jobs, and get Albertans back to work. I believe in the opinion of the government that also transparency is key to a democratic government. Absolutely and one hundred per cent, transparency is key to a democratic government. Therefore, I'd like to remind the members opposite that, if they choose, they can access the information that they want through FOIP or any other similar request available to all Albertans. [interjections]

However, this motion for a return diverts attention away from the current issues, and we want to keep people focused on the task at hand, getting the economy rolling and dealing with COVID. Madam Speaker, I say it again. There are other ways to get access to the information. We invite the members opposite to request this information, again, for their edification through FOIP. The amount of time and resources needed to fill this motion, again, takes away valuable time from the folks that are doing other work. [interjections] Unlike how we managed government – I'll repeat that again because they're heckling, Madam Speaker. They just won't let it sink in. Those folks are not sitting around on their hands waiting for them to pick up the phone for when they make that call for a request that could be taken elsewhere. That member that just made this motion was a cabinet minister, as was the member that just presented it, and they should well know, if they managed their departments properly, that those folks are busy. They're not just waiting with bated breath for the next call from this place.

I'm going to go back to a speaking note here. I'll give him a little chance to get me on that. Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, it's the policy of this government to make the best deal for Albertans. Whatever we do through these grants to stimulate local economies or tax cuts to create jobs across the province to strengthen our economy, we do it for the betterment of this province and these people. If we're going to weather the next few months of the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions, we need an Alberta that

is competitive, economically stable, and ready to support Albertans to protect both lives and livelihoods during this pandemic.

The other thing I'd like to throw in there, Madam Speaker, is that we're going to make sure Albertans are strong. We're going to make sure we're doing the work they sent us here to do. In essence, I would like to ask all the other Members of the Legislative Assembly – hopefully, my remarks are more compelling than my hon. member from across the way – that this Motion for a Return 11 absolutely should be rejected, and there are other ways and avenues to do it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Oh, there were so many people speaking at that time, I assumed most of you would jump up and join debate. I might say, for those that wish to have conversation, there is a lounge outside of this Chamber in which they can enjoy that time.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Motion for a Return 11?

Seeing none, would the hon. member like to close debate? No.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:30 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dach	Renaud	Schmidt
Feehan	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Armstrong-Homeniuk	Long	Toor
Ellis	Lovely	van Dijken
Getson	Rosin	Walker
Horner	Singh	Williams
Issik	Smith	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 5	Against – 15
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[Motion for a Return 11 lost]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill 205 Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act

**The Chair:** I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-East to speak to the bill.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am thankful as well to this Chamber for having this opportunity to have Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act, be considered at the Committee of the Whole. It is my pleasure to rise today to take this opportunity to expound more about the purpose of Bill 205, at the same time giving more and better understanding about my intention for having this bill.

Let me start, Madam Chair, by reading section 3 of Bill 205 as this does not only reflect the title of the bill, but also it is the foundation and the basis for laying out its purposes. Section 3 reads: "The month of April in each year is to be known as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month." It is also made in conformity with the provisions of the motion passed on April 2015 by the House of Commons, M-587, which also declares the month of April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month. It is to embrace the diversity in our country and recognizes that Canada does not fail to include everyone that was affected by these unfortunate events. Section 3 of Bill 205 seeks to provide Alberta's position about genocide and that the month of April will be devoted to remembering the victims who have lost their lives in these genocides.

It is important to note that some of the victims and survivors of these atrocities or their families or relatives are living here in Alberta. We have been advocating about the superiority, importance, and respect for human rights and compassion to all, and I'm pleased to note that we are recognized to be one of the world's revered jurisdictions in doing such. We never stop reaching out and extending our helping hand, accepting the victims and their families here, providing shelter and a new beginning to all that have been victims of unfair treatment and abandoned human rights.

4:50

Here at the Legislature we mark the memorial of the Ukrainian famine and genocide every year as well as the Holocaust memorial. Moreover, we have the Holocaust memorial monument here on the Legislature Grounds.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

During these occasions and as we consider other months or days that have been declared like National Indigenous History Month or Black History Month, they are opportunities for us to pay special attention to these important occurrences and learn about them. A recognition month is important for us to become aware of the hatred that leads to genocide and to prevent future genocides through awareness and dialogue.

At this juncture, Mr. Chair, I would like to propose an amendment to Bill 205 particularly, and I will read it for the record if I may.

**The Acting Chair:** Just one moment, Member. If we could get distribution on that. Have you got copies, sir?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah. I have the copies here.

**The Acting Chair:** Okay. Just one sec.

Members, this will be referred to as amendment A1.

Just give me one second. As soon as we have a copy, you can go ahead, sir. Go ahead, Member.

**Mr. Singh:** I'd like to move that Bill 205, Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act, be amended in section 2(b)(iv) by striking out "to increase awareness of genocides that have occurred across the world, including the following" and substituting "to increase awareness of genocides recognized by the House of Commons of Canada, as follows."

This amendment will clarify the intention of the portion of Bill 205 that seeks to increase awareness of genocide by explicitly mentioning that the list of genocides in the bill have been recognized by the House of Commons. The intention to adopt the recognized genocides by the House of Commons is to reflect the broad consensus of the nation. There will certainly be continued

discussion and dialogue on genocide as Albertans' awareness grows. The genocides listed in Bill 205 are meant to be a starting point for these conversations.

There are other genocides that have not been officially recognized by the House of Commons. For example, the House of Commons subcommittee has been studying the ongoing persecution of Uighur Muslims in China and has heard from experts who call for it to be recognized as a genocide. This illustrates that debates on genocide recognition are ongoing. More importantly, it shows that these are not closed issues and that some genocides may still be perpetrated today and in the future. This reality makes Bill 205 more, not less, relevant and necessary. Moving forward, we can no longer undo the happenings of the past, but what we can do is acknowledge them and learn from them. These events have left a devastating effect on humanity.

Let me just share a recent article that was posted by the United Nations international children's emergency fund, or UNICEF, entitled Rohingya Children Bearing Brunt of COVID Disruptions in Bangladesh Refugee Camps as Education Facilities Remain Closed. It mentions the current situation of Rohingya refugee children and families in Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. The UNICEF regional director of South Asia, Jean Gough, said, "Rohingya refugee children and families have shown extraordinary resilience while living in exile in Bangladesh." Three years since they have fled for relief, they are now facing new challenges. The article goes on to state:

In spite of incredibly difficult circumstances, the refugee population is actively participating in response efforts to prevent and manage the threat of COVID-19 in the camps . . .

. . . Education facilities in the camps have been closed since March as is the case in the rest of the country. Around 315,000 Rohingya refugee children and adolescents have been out of their learning centres.

Mr. Chair, the incident that happened to the Rohingya is considered as one of the fastest flights of refugees in the world. There were around 750,000 stateless persons afraid for their lives as military forces attacked their villages with the intent to exterminate a single ethnic minority group, killing thousands and raping women in the process.

In speaking right now, Mr. Chair, we must stand together, continue to fight for human dignity, and spread awareness of the devastating impacts of genocide.

Again, thank you to the members who have expressed support for this bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(6) the committee shall now rise and report progress on Bill 205.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on Bill 205. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the committee on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. That is so ordered.



## Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll recognize the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

### Electricity Transmission and Distribution Costs

515. Mr. Horner moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities to lower transmission and distribution costs for consumers.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a great pleasure to rise and bring forward private member's Motion 515. I've enjoyed watching the thoughtful private members' motions that have been brought forward on Mondays over the last year and a half. I've watched private members urge the government, from both sides of the aisle, to address big-picture type initiatives for our province, bring attention to and shine a light on important areas deserving of recognition, and attempt to nudge the government to address unresolved issues important to the member and the member's constituents.

Motion 515 is my attempt to address what I believe is a critical issue for Alberta, the egregiously high cost of transmission and distribution of electricity in this province. I bring forward Motion 515 knowing full well that the potential levers held by the government to address this issue on behalf of Albertans are complicated, imperfect, and would be of consequence, but that being said, I'm bringing it forward anyways because I believe it's so very important, important for all Albertans but most definitely for those in rural Alberta and doubly important at this time, when we know the Finance minister has made it clear there is no path to balance in this province without economic growth. Unaffordable electricity bills hinder growth greatly and make our province less livable to boot.

With that being said, I'd like to read Motion 515 into the record. "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities to lower transmission and distribution costs for consumers." I'll be honest with my colleagues here in the House, through you, Mr. Speaker. I would have much preferred stronger language than "urge." Perhaps "direct the government" would have felt a little more appropriate, but at the kind and wise direction of Parliamentary Counsel we've settled on the more traditional "urge," and for a nonbinding motion like this, I'm sure that'll work just fine.

Just to start at the beginning, this isn't an issue that I've had to be educated on since being elected. I've witnessed it evolve over the last decade or so and had a front-row seat when the large direct-current transmission lines running north and south were built, running through the community that I call home south of Sheerness. I can remember the construction of these lines and the desire of many for the government to prove to Albertans that they were necessary. It became very political back then. It was a real wedge issue dividing the Wildrose and PC parties of the day, at least locally. But I'm not here to open old wounds, just to give some background, Mr. Speaker. Nor am I here to blame any previous governments, the members opposite, or our beloved Transportation minister and crew who were part of governments past.

Decisions were made, well intentioned, I'm sure, to massively build up our transmission infrastructure based on the belief and assumption that the roughly 5 per cent increase in demand for electricity would continue. Unfortunately, it has not. Also of note while reminiscing about the construction back then, it was the first glimpse for many into cost-plus infrastructure construction on

behalf of the province. It was spoken about near and far, the anecdotal tales of deliberate overspending during construction. I'm glad that this government campaigned on greatly narrowing the practice of cost-plus construction.

This is the crux of the issue: the transmission lines were overbuilt, and now Alberta's households and industry are left paying for this overbuild. The cost to Albertans is relatively fixed over many decades or the life of the infrastructure although there are disparities in regions. Notably, distribution charges are highest in the lower populated regions in east-central Alberta and northern Alberta. The cost to Albertans is not equal, and this fact is not lost on many in rural Alberta.

5:00

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I remember clearly a resolution passed at the AUMA AGM back in 2019, back when we still met in groups. It seems like a long time ago now. The reason I remember the resolution and moment clearly is that it was proposed by some very concerned and committed constituents of mine. The resolution was brought forward by the town of Drumheller, and it stated:

It is therefore resolved that AUMA advocate for the Province to implement a modernized electrical system that has reasonable and predictable prices... to support economic development throughout Alberta.

Further be it resolved that AUMA advocate for the AUC to reduce the disparity in electricity pricing for transmission and distribution charges across the Province.

That resolution passed that day by 71 per cent even after Mayor Nenshi did his best to sway the convention hall to vote against it.

Community leaders across Alberta doing their best to better the lives of their people and encourage whatever economic development they can muster in their small communities see high transmission and distribution rates for electricity as more than hurtful and see higher rates compared to other communities as punitive and a comparative disadvantage. Mr. Speaker, I've had many a conversation about the high, unaffordable cost of distribution and transmission of electricity with constituents before I was elected and since. This is a general issue for all consumers of electricity in Alberta, but I would like to highlight three groups who have reached out to me to express their extreme frustration.

[Ms Glasgo in the chair]

The first is seniors. I've had countless seniors reach out to me and explain in great detail how on their fixed income they simply cannot afford their power bill. Then they like clockwork clarify that it is not the actual power but the distribution and transmission. Many tell how they have tried to make their homes and their habits more energy efficient, but their efforts aren't really reflected in the bill when over 60 per cent of the bill is distribution and transmission. They almost always then ask: "What am I to do? Groceries are on the rise, too. What choices does this leave us?" I can assure everyone in this House that the answer of contacting the Utilities Consumer Advocate is not a popular one, nor should it be.

The second group is oil and gas producers. Before you say that that's quite a jump, to go from seniors to oil and gas, I'll try and explain why. We all know that Alberta's oil and gas producers have been and continue to face a monumental challenge. Low commodity prices have pushed many under, forced massive consolidations, and many are just barely hanging on. I've had constituents who are owner-operator types of junior companies go through their electricity bills with me. Even as they attempted to wait out the storm by shutting their wells in, not using any power, they still could not avoid the fixed wire charges. Now, revenue can mask a multitude of sins, and perhaps this small company was okay

with paying \$130,000 a month on a power bill of which \$90,000 was fixed wire charges when they could cover it in more normal times. But when they shut in all their wells and are using no power and the power bill is still \$90,000 a month, things will change. The electricity is what's required. The grid, our grid, is convenient, but industry has options. More and more stories like this lead to unhooking from our grid and these operators generating their own power.

The last group is agriculture producers, specifically those who use a lot of power like irrigation operators. Now, you could insert any industry-type manufacturing or processing that uses a lot of power; this is just who reached out to me. At an irrigation meeting in Brooks I was pulled aside and shown a handful of irrigators' bills. A large operator's bill was for \$137,000 – now, this would power very many pivots and pumping sites – of which only \$32,000 was for electricity. He was quite clear what this meant for his operation. He was already in the process of unhooking from the grid. A lot of these sites are in remote locations, and these operators have invested a lot in the electrical infrastructure, but when the delivery portions of the bill are this high, they have the means to go behind the grid and generate their own power, and they are in droves.

If we're unable to remedy this situation even a little bit, more types of industry will look to move behind the grid, and every time they do, that leaves fewer Albertans – the seniors on fixed income, those without a choice – to pay the tab. We understand the issue. It was overbuilt and expensive. Demand has dropped off, so fewer Albertans are paying the fixed tab. But I urge the government, through the very nonprescriptive Motion 515, to find solutions. Whatever the idea of the Alberta advantage was, one leg of it most definitely was affordable power and not just the electricity but the whole bill. Going forward, Alberta families and industry need affordable electricity bills, and it will be necessary for a robust economic recovery in every corner of our province.

I hope everyone in this House will support Motion 515. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Anybody else wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and offer a few comments in favour of Motion 515, and I want to thank my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler for bringing forward this motion. I, too, share his disappointment that these kinds of things can't be worded more strongly than "urge." It certainly would be nice if members of the opposition and backbenchers had more tools at our disposal to hold the members of Executive Council to account although I will note that it's quite ironic, of course, that we just went through two-plus hours of debate where members of the UCP backbenches just argued very vociferously why they shouldn't hold members of Executive Council to account. Anyway, we take the wins where we can get them, so I will share that sentiment with my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. I certainly urge all members in the UCP caucus who aren't members of Executive Council to continue doing the work of holding this government to account.

We certainly support the goal of lowering costs for consumers, the whole cost of electricity, and the member is quite right that transmission and distribution costs do make up a significant portion of the bill. I can appreciate my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. You know, it's particularly concerning to him and to his constituents, I can imagine, because they only have to look out their windows every day to see what it is that they're paying for. I've driven the highway from Hanna to Brooks many times – of course, there is massive power infrastructure along that highway –

wondering why the heck we're paying so much for these things standing out in the fields that nobody is using, right? So it's natural that it's top of mind for my colleague's constituents from Drumheller-Stettler, and I certainly appreciate the fact that he's bringing these concerns forward.

I share these concerns about the fate of our transmission and distribution system in Alberta, Madam Speaker. Certainly, the Alberta electrical grid is poised to undergo significant changes in its composition. Of course, we as a government were committed to phasing out coal-fired electricity, and the good news is that just last week, I think, Capital Power announced that one of its power plants in the Wabamun area, of course, will be switched over to natural gas by 2023. We can see that with the increase in demands for action on climate change and the subsequent decrease in the cost of renewable energy generation and the nature of the transmission and distribution system that needs to be built in order to make sure that Albertans can actively and effectively access a reliable source of electricity, there are, I expect, significant changes that are going to be coming to the transmission and distribution system in Alberta.

All that to say, Madam Speaker, that not only is it important that Albertans understand why it is that the old system was built to the extent it was and why it is that Albertans are being asked to pay for that system that we didn't need, but how can we better structure the payment system with respect to transmission and distribution so that Albertans aren't left on the hook for another system that will not meet our needs and will be incredibly expensive? Certainly, we haven't heard any word from members of Executive Council about what their future vision is for the Alberta electricity generation and transmission and distribution system, and I suspect that the answers that the government will need to bring forward at some point will be controversial.

5:10

On the note of controversy, Madam Speaker, of course, I appreciate the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's unwillingness to open up old wounds between the Wildrose and the PC parties. By all means, I certainly – you know, don't refuse to open up those old wounds on our account. We're happy to have those grievances aired here in public. It certainly makes for an interesting and entertaining debate, some transparency into the thinking of members of that caucus that Albertans would like to see.

With respect, though, to protecting Albertans' pocketbooks, because I think that's really what this motion comes down to, like I said, I appreciate the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's motion, and I respect its intent, but there is already a lot that the government has done to negatively impact the pocketbooks of his constituents as well as mine. Of course, the government made significant changes to the electricity market. That was one of the first things they did after the election in 2019. By axing the electricity price cap, of course, we've seen 20 per cent increases in electricity costs in the big cities, Edmonton and Calgary, at the beginning of the year, and there is no guarantee, Madam Speaker, that those costs won't shoot out of control without significant government intervention in the future.

Government has undertaken a number of other initiatives that have made life more expensive for Albertans. We've just spent hours and hours of time here in this Chamber debating changes to the automobile insurance legislation. We've seen significant increases. I've had constituents in my office talking about 25, 50 per cent increases in their automobile insurance coverage over the last few months, Madam Speaker. Of course, we would encourage the government to look at something like that as well. This is an important pocketbook issue.

Of course, the government deindexed the income tax brackets this year. Back in the old days of 2019 the income tax brackets would increase with inflation. That meant that people's wages could rise with inflation, and they weren't expected to pay more in taxes. Well, the government decided to do away with that, meaning that average working Albertans will see their overall income tax bills go up at the same time that, of course, they're giving a \$4.7 billion handout to the most profitable corporations in the province.

Moreover, the government has repealed the regulation that they actually voted in favour of with respect to regulating tuition and school fees at postsecondary institutions, a remarkable about-face – certainly, there was nothing in the UCP platform about revoking the regulation with respect to tuition fees – so tuition is set to skyrocket here in the province of Alberta. You know, the sad thing is that even though they are still allowing tuition to increase, they are cutting the budgets of every postsecondary institution in Alberta so much that the tuition increases that they're allowing won't even make up the difference in the budget.

**Mr. Loewen:** How is this relevant to power?

**Mr. Schmidt:** I can hear my friend from Central Peace-Notley getting agitated, of course, that in his opinion I'm not speaking to the motion.

Of course, Madam Speaker, I am speaking to the motion. The motion is with respect to the impacts of government decisions on the pocketbooks of everyday Albertans. Certainly, transmission and distribution are a significant part of that. I think it's only fair to highlight all of these things that the government has the power to address when it comes to protecting the pocketbooks of Albertans, yet has failed to do.

With respect to the postsecondary sector, of course, we've seen significant interest rate hikes on student loans as well. That was another thing that the government did at the same time that they were scrapping tuition and fee regulations. They were hiking interest rates on student loans. It's also interesting to me, Madam Speaker, that during this COVID pandemic the government has ... [Mr. Schmidt's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and speak to Motion 515 as introduced by my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. The motion reads, "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities to lower transmission and distribution costs for consumers." I must admit that given recent history of previous government decisions involving the electricity file, it does make me a little nervous to stand here and ask the government to get involved again, but the motion does ask the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities, and with that in mind, I am prepared to support this motion.

Just to walk down memory lane, we have recent history in the past decade or so, a little longer, where previous governments have made questionable decisions that have left Alberta electricity consumers and/or taxpayers stuck with paying for the consequences of those decisions. In 2009 the previous PC government estimated that there would be an approximately 5 per cent annual increase in demand for electricity in Alberta; however, this was a great overestimation, and demand did not increase at that rate. As a result of decisions made at that time, transmission lines were overbuilt, and now Alberta families and industry, consumers of the electricity, have been left to pay the bill.

When Albertans removed the previous NDP government last year, they made it clear that they were not happy with some of the decisions the NDP government had made regarding the electricity file also. I think the saga began when the previous government triggered a change-in-law clause within the power purchasing agreements. When the previous government decided to increase the province's carbon taxes on large industrial emitters, this clause was triggered and gave the companies the ability to hand back agreements to the Balancing Pool. As a result, Alberta consumers are on the hook for close to \$2 billion in Balancing Pool losses over the last number of years. Consumers will be paying for many years to come to pay off that \$2 billion bill.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As if that was not enough, in 2016 the previous government signed up Alberta taxpayers for 14 years of payments, totalling \$1.4 billion, to electricity generators to compensate them for shutting their plants down early. It is also worth noting that Alberta at this time has to import power from neighbouring jurisdictions. In other words, Alberta, the province blessed with one of the largest energy reserves in the world, is a net importer of electricity at this time.

Is this a result of previous government interference in shutting down coal-powered producers early? I do not have the answer to that question at this time, but I do know that in four years of government the NDP, at a minimum, cost Alberta consumers and taxpayers \$3.4 billion in unnecessary electricity expenses. Those decisions significantly damage our Alberta competitiveness and the economy. Nowadays, Mr. Speaker, \$3.4 billion: we say it as if it really amounts to not much, but if we take a look at what \$3.4 billion in four years of NDP rule, about 1,400 days, cost Alberta, it sums up to about 2 and a half million dollars per day of increased costs to the Alberta consumer and the Alberta taxpayer, a 2-and-a-half-million-dollar-per-day increase just on the electricity file.

5:20

That is a huge bill to pay, so needless to say it makes me nervous when we are asking government to once again get involved in the electricity file, but considering how important electricity is to Alberta's overall ability to compete on a global scale, anything we can do as policy-makers to ease the costs related to electricity transmission and distribution must be investigated. A significant issue, especially in rural communities, is the extremely high electricity transmission and distribution costs reflected on their electricity bills. Mr. Speaker, to put it simply, provincial governments make decisions on behalf of all; therefore, all must be treated fairly.

Unaffordable electricity bills in rural Alberta greatly hinder growth and make our province less competitive. I can attest that Albertans in rural and remote communities work extremely hard to make ends meet for their families, for their communities, and ultimately for our province. Overcharging for such a fundamental utility undercuts the work that they do, limits growth in these areas, and ultimately affects the sectors and industries that they work in.

As our province continues to weather the COVID-19 storm, we have to work with Albertans to stimulate our economy, drive innovation, and build a stronger Alberta that is ready to participate and compete on a national and international level right away. Part of this plan includes getting a better deal for rural Albertans, especially with their electricity bills.

I think what I've been trying to highlight in my discussion here is that it's both the consumer and the taxpayer that have been hit hard over the last number of years with regard to decisions that governments have made and that have gone sideways. Our previous speaker was talking with regard to the caps on electricity, as if

Albertans were paying more because the caps were removed, but, really, the price of the electricity hasn't changed based off those decisions; it's just who happens to have to pay for it, whether the consumer pays or whether the taxpayer pays. It still has to be paid for. The price of the electricity, regardless of who pays for it, is the price of the electricity.

Part of a plan to move into a more competitive environment internationally includes getting a better deal for rural Albertans, especially with their electricity bills. Previous provincial governments have created this mess, and now it is our responsibility to work with electricity agencies. I stress that we need to encourage the government to work with stakeholders and not to superimpose decisions made by government on the stakeholders. I can support this motion based off urging the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities to alleviate any unfair consequences. During the fiscal reckoning this province is facing, Albertans need access to reliable and competitively priced electricity. As we continue to support Albertans across this province in all areas, businesses, and industries, we need to ensure that something as fundamental as electricity is easily obtainable and fairly priced.

I thought I would just take a quick look at a power bill that I was faced with last month. I'm just going to scare it up here a minute, just to give a sense of the power bill. Consumption was 629 kilowatts. The energy charge was \$43.38; the transmission charge, \$25.45; distribution charges of \$114.90. You know, we take a look at that and especially for rural residents that are on fixed incomes, some of the seniors in my community and those types of individuals: they have a very limited ability to continue to pay those increased distribution charges. I believe it is a responsibility of the government to ensure that costs with regard to electricity, a very fundamental need within our society today, are fairly priced right across our province, and I do believe that we need to urge the government to look at all avenues that can be undertaken to allow these costs to be more fairly distributed. I believe that Motion 515 will help us meet that goal and support rural Albertans at this time of economic crisis.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting Motion 515. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker, to speak to Motion 515 this afternoon in the Assembly. The Member for Drumheller-Stettler has brought forward an issue using his opportunity to bring forward a private member's motion other than government motion to demonstrate his determination to represent rural Alberta, Drumheller-Stettler in particular.

With respect to this motion I think all Albertans who use electricity, no matter where they live, were in his thoughts when he was bringing forward this motion to urge the government to work with electricity agencies and electrical utilities to lower transmission and distribution costs for consumers. I think all Albertans would support this urging, this wish, and it's something that I think everybody in this province would like to see, lower transmission and distribution costs. So, of course, I too will join to support the motion brought forward by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

I know that in this motion there may be a number of things that haven't been contemplated, but one of the things I'm wondering about: I wonder if indeed in the contemplation of the motion whether or not the member actually considered a function for rural electrification associations in assisting him with his goal of bringing

down costs of transmission and distribution for consumers, especially for electricity in rural areas. I know that the REAs have been around for generations – I think there are 26 left in the province – and they may, I believe, have an important role to play in the economic transmission and distribution of power, particularly in rural Alberta, and I'd like to see that role fleshed out in future in discussions with the Member for Drumheller-Stettler if he is successful in having this motion brought forward to see what, in fact, role the rural electrification associations can play in bringing forward his goal of lowering transmission and distribution costs.

I really think there are elements in the REAs that we should take advantage of and support so that this long-standing element of Alberta's electrical distribution and transmission system is allowed to flourish in the province rather than being allowed to wither on the vine. I think in many respects the REAs are kind of under attack from electrical distribution companies in the province, and I think that we should see ways of having them in a modern electrical distribution network sustain the operation of those who want to support an REA and look to them to find out what benefit they can offer in maintaining management costs for that transmission and distribution.

In the member's deliberations, Mr. Speaker, when he was looking at protecting rural Alberta in particular from the costs of transmission and distribution of electricity, those two items on the bill that all Albertans note are, of course, separate from the cost of actual electricity used and seem in many cases to be inordinately high, but the member should also know that there are a number of other costs in this province, particularly in rural Alberta, which are being foisted upon residents outside of our major centres by the government's actions. Of course, the intent of this motion is to lower costs for those consumers in the province, but those consumers in this province, Mr. Speaker, are suffering added, additional burdens that this government has brought upon them in a number of different ways.

5:30

For example, my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar did mention insurance costs, but there's a whole array of downloading of costs onto rural Albertans in particular that the AUMA and Rural Municipalities Association and others have voiced opposition to, including many, many residents of rural Alberta who have contacted myself as well, wondering why they deserve to have these downloading of costs happen to them; for example, with respect to policing. That's an area where costs are also being downloaded. The Member for Drumheller-Stettler will probably also be receiving e-mails not only about distribution and transmission charges for electricity adding costs but also about rural policing costs being downloaded to municipalities in Alberta and also adding to the burden.

Also, there are changes to the infrastructure tax revenue formula that have downloaded costs onto the rural municipalities. Not only downloading costs, but it's going to reduce their revenue stream by 30 to 40 per cent. Of course, they're screaming about that. The further changes to the necessity for oil and gas companies to pay portions of their taxes as well have reduced the revenue stream for rural Alberta, something on top of the distribution and transmission charges that I'm sure the Member for Drumheller-Stettler had in mind when he was looking to write this Motion Other than a Government Motion 515 to relieve the cost and burden on residents of rural Alberta in particular.

There have been oodles of various different costs that have been added on to the bill for Albertans, who now have to essentially pay for a toll if they want to cross a certain bridge in their constituency. They may have to pay a toll if they want to get it put to the top of

the priority list in order to get it built, so locally individual farmers and businesspeople as well as regular citizens and tourists going through their area will end up having to pay a higher toll on an infrastructure on top of the extra charges that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler is talking about trying to reduce with his urging of the government to pay attention to the transmission and distributions costs and take steps to lower them.

Good luck with that, Mr. Speaker, because in other areas of high costs that are being downloaded onto Albertans, particularly in rural Alberta, those pleas have gone unheard, so we'll see if indeed the government has ears for this member's motion other than a government motion to minimize costs for distribution and transmission of electricity. Those ears have been deaf to other things such as insurance costs, fees for camping, paying tolls on roads that they might want to have built in their constituency, and, on top of that, paying for the lack of revenue that the government doesn't have, the \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that, of course, yielded no jobs and ended up putting a big hole in our revenue stream once again. That's going to have to be made up for by other means of generating revenue, by Albertans in rural Alberta paying extra downloaded fees that this government has foisted upon them.

Interest rates on student loans: another thing. I mean, if you start adding up the extra costs, Mr. Speaker, that this government has brought onto the shoulders of particularly rural Albertans but Albertans right throughout the province, you'll find that the transmission and distribution costs of electricity are but one element of a huge package of added costs and taxes that this government sees fit to bring to the table and asks Albertans to pay out of a dwindling pocketbook or perhaps a pocketbook that doesn't exist at all because so many of us are unemployed right now as a result of the pandemic, the downturn in the economy, and the choices that this government has made in terms of doing things that will add costs to the means of doing business in the province.

I won't get into huge detail on the elements of the changes to electricity. The electricity market has switched to an energy-only market from a capacity market. That's a huge debate in and of itself. But my position, Mr. Speaker, of course, is that the government's changes to reverse course from what our previous government had in place are ultimately long term going to cost people in this province a lot of money no matter what, notwithstanding what members opposite have been trying to argue today again in the House.

With that, I urge members to support the motion but be aware of the added costs elsewhere.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm always happy to stand and support any motion that ensures my constituents save their hard-earned money. That's why I'm standing here today to speak to Motion 515, brought forward by my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. One of the greatest responsibilities that this government has undertaken is making life more affordable for Albertans across the province, and I take great pride in working towards that goal. Unfortunately, one of the biggest obstacles to that goal in my riding is the extremely high electricity distribution charges to rural Albertans. Now, it didn't take very long to do a little bit of research on this matter. I made a few phone calls to people living out in my area as well as folks living in Edmonton, business owners, and it's on everybody's mind.

I recall the town halls and the debates that took place back in 2012, 2013-14, when they were looking at the routes for the big infrastructure builds that were the order of the day. Not everybody

was happy with what was going on, and it almost seemed like things were being pushed on folks. I've got grain farmers up in my area that have to dodge power poles that are not running down a road allowance but right down the middle of their quarter. They, of course, were opposed to that kind of thing. They're paid out on a yearly basis for that loss of use, you know, but when you're talking some of these cultivators that are upwards of 50 feet and seed drills, it's quite a chore to work around those even with GPS.

Like I said, there was some opposition to it, especially on the routing of it. I recall that quite strongly. Unfortunately, now those same folks are expected to carry a more substantial portion of the burden to pay for those things. I'd like to just remind folks that if you're driving down Anthony Henday, especially over on the east side of the city, and you see the big towers there, I wish there was a flag showing which way the electricity was going. It's not actually leaving Edmonton and going out and feeding rural Alberta. It's actually coming from power plants in rural Alberta and feeding Edmonton and Calgary. That's one important thing to remember. Distribution charges: when they talk about them in rural Alberta compared to Edmonton, it's an economy of scale and complexity and how many industries or residents you're serving with that power line. Like I said, it has to be understood that the power actually comes from power plants in rural Alberta, for the most part, feeding Edmonton and Calgary.

I just want to talk about the inequity across the province. The Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock mentioned the unfair cost to seniors. Now, if you take – I do have some comparisons here for residences – a senior living in Edmonton or Calgary, a couple on fixed income in a 1,500 square foot bungalow, and they consume about the same amount of power as, say, somebody that's living out either in Stettler or in St. Paul, the difference in that power bill is very close to about 100 bucks a month. You've got those same seniors on a fixed income living in rural having to pay an extra \$100 a month. That comes out to, you know, close to \$1,200 a year, year after year after year after year.

This is, I think, what we're trying to – at least what I'm hoping that this motion will address is some of that inequality. You know, I talked to people that are trying to run not-for-profits and charitable organizations out in rural, and again they're hit with these same carrying charges and distribution charges that are affecting everyone.

**5:40**

We talked about competitiveness. I have a friend out in St. Paul that has a greenhouse, and I got her to send me a copy of her bill. Last month the energy consumption was \$440.30. The total bill was \$982.14. That greenhouse competing with another greenhouse from Edmonton or one of the bigger centres – you know, it's pretty tough for them to compete.

Now, I also got a few folks to send me power bills from their homes here. One Edmonton house's energy consumption was \$30.08. The distribution charges were \$21.80. Now, for that same month on my home the cost of energy was \$67.29, distribution charges were \$122.21, and transmission was \$48. So out of a \$277.97 bill, \$206.63 was for other than energy consumption. Another property out there in my area: cost of electricity, \$51.10; distribution charge, \$102.51. This is what I'm trying to get at, Mr. Speaker, just that we need to address the inequality.

We did some quick math at a discussion over coffee. You can call it some cowboy math or napkin mathematics, whatever. We took the population of the province, and if we distributed these costs properly, it would mean an increase of approximately \$12 for urban, but it would mean a decrease of \$80 for rural Albertans in every residence. I really think that it's something that we have to look at.

It's a reality of it, especially when it comes to seniors on a fixed income. That could be a big difference, you know, \$800 a year, \$900 a year. It could make or break. It's absolutely unacceptable that rural Albertans have been left to foot this bill. Those who choose to live in rural and remote communities should not be penalized with high electricity bills.

One term that has come to light with current events is the term "essential service." The services performed by those in rural and remote communities are absolutely essential. The hard work put in by rural Albertans puts food on our tables, clothes on our backs, and keeps our economy afloat. Rural Albertans continue to have our backs and support us, especially during the current fiscal reckoning our province is in. Therefore, it's absolutely necessary that we ensure that rural Albertans can continue to work hard with less money coming out of their pockets every month, and this is a sure way that we could make a benefit to every rural Albertan. The previous NDP government, before they were fired last year, worked to undermine the livelihoods of rural Albertans and make their jobs harder.

As we continue to fight against the COVID-19 economic fallout, we have to work with Albertans to stimulate our economy, drive innovation, and create a stronger Alberta that supports everyone in all areas of our province. Rural communities should not have to deal with such high prices while larger communities and cities seem to get by.

Previous provincial governments created this mess with overbuilding, and now this UCP government is taking responsibility for these past mistakes and is working to alleviate any economic disparities experienced by rural communities. As our government works to lower electrical bills for rural Albertans, we are also making the statement that all Albertans across this great province are noticed, are cared for, and are fought for. It is time that rural Albertans got a fair deal that better reflects the work they've put in for our province and that shows our gratefulness. Although many rural Albertans are happy to continue doing thankless jobs that sustain our province, it is our responsibility to look out for them and ensure that they have a fair deal.

We often talk about a fair deal here in Alberta when it comes to federal government, but I really think that we have to take a closer look at this and make a fair deal within Alberta so that all residents and businesses are treated the same so that we can maintain competitiveness in rural communities with businesses. I have a manufacturer out in a small community that employs about 100 people, and when you look at his power bills – and he's trying to restructure right now. He's actually thinking of moving to another centre because of the difference in cost to him out there. If we want to protect our rural communities and maintain competitiveness with urban areas, I think this is a step in the right direction.

I very much thank my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler for bringing this motion forward. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Motion 515, which asks: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with electricity agencies and electric utilities to lower transmission and distribution costs for consumers." I think that's certainly a good motion to be putting forward, and I'm happy to stand up in support of the motion.

I think that, you know, the year has been a very difficult year for many people. Financially it has been extremely difficult for people who have been unable to maintain a full salary while COVID has caused many of them to lose hours or in other ways diminish their ability to be successful in their business because of the loss of the

ability to sell their products and so on. We certainly have many people who are in distress, and working with the government and the utilities to reduce electrical costs would be an excellent thing to do.

Of course, I must point out that this government has essentially, since they have come into government, worked in exactly the opposite direction, always moving money from consumers and individuals into corporate hands, as they've done right from the beginning with their \$4.7 billion gift to foreign corporations that used the money to actually leave the province and reduce the well-being of the citizens of the province of Alberta, and as they have done in terms of almost every single one of their financial bills being brought into this House, including the fact that previously the government, when we were in power, had introduced capacity markets to help protect consumers against price spikes and brownouts and blackouts.

Now this government has returned our market from the capacity market back to an energy-only market; in other words, transferring money straight into the hands of the corporate elite and taking money out of the hands of the average citizen in the province, which, apparently, this motion is seeking to correct. It's too bad that the backbenchers have to introduce a motion into the House to influence their own government given that their government apparently doesn't listen to the backbenchers in their caucus, as we've seen over and over again in this House. It's very disappointing.

It's also disappointing that this government has removed the regulated rate option that we had put into place when we put the cap on rates at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This government removed that, making the average citizen in the province of Alberta susceptible to price spikes, again transferring money from individuals into the hands of the corporate entities that exist in this province, most of which, by the way, have not used the money to actually provide better services to people in the community but, rather, to shore up their own financial situation. It's very disappointing that we find ourselves in this position.

I'm also particularly disappointed that this government has failed to renew the program referred to as the REP program, which was the renewable energy program, that very successfully worked with utilities, people interested in providing electricity in this province, and all of the indigenous communities in the province of Alberta to ensure not only that we got access to the lowest possible rates for electricity through renewable energy, which had the very explicit benefit of not only providing us with stable energy contracts well into the future, but it also provided us with renewable energy, which has been demonstrated to be the least costly form of energy right now in the province of Alberta, significantly less costly than coal, for example. In fact, we've seen that the Genesee power plants just west of the city are now being converted 10 years ahead of time from coal into ...

5:50

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but 55 minutes of debate have elapsed. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) the Member for Drumheller-Stettler has five minutes to close debate.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for speaking to and supporting Motion 515. As we've heard in this debate, the affordability of electricity bills and the differences in the cost of distribution and transmission in different regions of the province are a real issue that needs to be addressed. This issue has not snuck up on us. It has been a real concern for some time, and failing to address it will, I'm afraid, only make matters worse. More people, sectors, and industries who have the ability to

will continue to move behind the fence, generate their own power, and leave the fixed costs of our overbuilt infrastructure to those who don't have that option. This includes our seniors on fixed incomes and every other family that's struggling to keep the lights on.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we know what brought us to this point. We know that the infrastructure was overbuilt with a big price tag and that demand has not nearly kept up with these assumptions. Instead of a slightly overbuilt system we can grow into, we have a greatly overbuilt system with demand going down. In fact, AESO, the operator, made clear in their December 2020 update that Alberta's annual load has declined since 2018 and is not forecasted to recover any time soon.

We also, I would say, know the motivations and goals behind the transmission overbuild, not only built for the future to keep up with demand assumptions, but it would appear we place great priority on interconnectivity with our neighbours, with interties between B.C.'s hydro and the thermal generators in Saskatchewan and Montana. It makes sense if the goal is to procure cheap electricity. At many times we are able to take B.C.'s excess. It would also make sense if the goal was to be able to export our excess power to the electricity-hungry west coast of the United States.

What has actually transpired, how this has actually played out, is that we're using these lines to become a net importer of electricity. In 2018 Alberta imported 2,663 gigawatt hours, and in 2019 we imported 1,521 gigawatt hours. The sick irony is not lost on any of my constituents that have just lost their job at one of the Westmoreland coal mines, that supply coal to the heartland generation sites at either Sheerness or Battle River, that they now get to pay more for transmission to import coal-fired power. We can't change the past, but it is my hope that affordability and reliability of electricity and how it's delivered will be a core value and principle of those making these decisions.

I have a hard time fathoming why the AUC would be continuing to build transmission lines out into the east country on the speculation of future renewable projects. My office takes many calls asking for explanation as to how this could be happening, and these same constituents who phone concerned often are landowners in close proximity to the lines, but they're also the very same Albertans who pay more on their power bill for transmission and distribution.

For example, the average December 2020 electricity bill in Calgary for a single-family home was \$122. The distribution and transmission costs for Calgary residents averaged \$37.48 – under a third of the bill. Edmonton was slightly higher. By comparison, the average December single-household bill in Drumheller was \$200, of which transmission and distribution was \$121.65, roughly 61 per cent of the bill. I hope members of this House will understand that while maybe this isn't a hot-button issue for them, it is for many. It's easy to extrapolate those household numbers and apply them to someone using more electricity and understand how limiting this disparity can be for economic development.

Rural economic development is a tough nut to crack and not just in Alberta. All across North America policy-makers are trying to find creative ways to slow up the mass exodus to our large cities. Just as rural Internet can be a deal breaker for those looking to start a business in rural, so can the overall cost of electricity. Our government has wisely targeted agricultural growth, with targeted investments as part of our economic relaunch strategy. More irrigated acres mean more potential for value-added products, growing jobs and the economy, and mitigating our risk as a province who trades largely in bulk goods. You know what you need a lot of to go vertical, up the chain in ag processing and eventually packaging? You need electricity, and it needs to be affordable.

Mr. Speaker, I'd once again like to thank the members of this House for telling their stories of concerned constituents and speaking in support of Motion 515. I'd like to encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 515 carried]

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

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know we've made a lot of progress this afternoon. I would like to make a motion that we move to adjourn the Assembly until 7:30 this evening.

Thank you.

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









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