



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 8, 2021

Day 80

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UC)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UC),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
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Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UC),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UC)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UC),  
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Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (Ind)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 62

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 1

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Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
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Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
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, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
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. Rowswell

Eggen  
Gray  
Issik  
Jones  
Phillips  
Singh  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf

Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Irwin  
Reid  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge

Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Glasgo  
Gottfried  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sabir  
Smith

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

Chair: Mr. Schow

Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Ceci  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Smith  
Sweet  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper

Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Long  
Neudorf  
Sabir  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Williams

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis

Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Amery  
Dang  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Nielsen  
Rutherford  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

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

Chair: Mr. Smith

Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Deol  
Ganley  
Gottfried  
Jones  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Renaud

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

Chair: Ms Phillips

Deputy Chair: Mr. Guthrie

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Pancholi  
Renaud  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Singh  
Turton  
Walker

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson

Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Ganley  
Getson  
Guthrie  
Issik  
Loewen  
Singh  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 8, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power or 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.

As it is our custom, we pay tribute to members who've passed away since we last met.

Today I would like to welcome members of the Sarich family, who are present in the Speaker's gallery.

**Mr. Ty Lund**

March 31, 1938, to February 28, 2021

**The Speaker:** Ty Lund served six terms in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Progressive Conservative Member for Rocky Mountain House from 1989 to 2012. During his tenure he was the minister of environmental protection from '94 to '99; minister of agriculture, food and rural development from '99 to 2001; Minister of Infrastructure from 2001 to 2004; minister of government services from 2004 to 2006; and the minister of infrastructure and transportation in 2006. Before turning to provincial politics, Mr. Lund was a farmer, then councillor and reeve of the municipal district of Clearwater. He was awarded Queen Elizabeth's golden jubilee in 2002. Mr. Lund spoke of how proud he was to be taking part, quote, in managing the affairs of this province and working in the best interests of Albertans. Ty Lund passed away on February 28, 2021, at the age of 82.

**Mrs. Janice Sarich**

April 26, 1958, to February 26, 2021

**The Speaker:** Janice Sarich served two terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Decore from 2008 to 2015. She was the parliamentary assistant for Education from 2008 to 2011. Born and raised in Edmonton, Mrs. Sarich attended the University of Alberta, where she completed two degrees, a bachelor of physical education and a master of education. She worked for many years as a business consultant, served as an Edmonton Catholic school board trustee from 2001 to 2007, and was appointed to the board of governors of Grant MacEwan University in 2019. Mrs. Sarich was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal in 2012. Mrs. Sarich demonstrated leadership and commitment to fairness in serving the interests of her constituents. Janice Sarich passed away on February 26, 2021, at the age of 62.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Lund and Mrs. Sarich each as you may have known them. Grant eternal rest unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Brooklyn Elhard. In observation of the COVID-19 public health restrictions please refrain from joining her.

**Ms Elhard:**

O Canada, our home and native land!

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

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

Thank you, members. Before we begin the daily Routine this afternoon, I would like to point out to all members that copies of the temporary amendments to the standing orders that were approved by the Assembly on February 25, 2021, have been printed on green paper and placed on members' desks for ease of reference. Replacement pages for your Standing Orders are being prepared and will be distributed in the coming weeks.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with the utmost admiration and respect there is a gratitude that comes to the members of the families who share the burdens of public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Sarich family, who are present in the Speaker's gallery today. Please rise as I call your name and remain standing after you've been introduced: Mrs. Sarich's husband, Steve Sarich, their daughter Larissa Sarich, and their son Steve Sarich. Hon. members, please welcome this family to our Assembly.

### Members' Statements

#### Famous Five

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, on March 8 this year we celebrate International Women's Day. This is a day to celebrate the amazing women we have in our lives and around the world. I know I have so many amazing women in my life, and if you look around the Legislative Assembly, you will see many great examples of strong women.

International Women's Day is also a day to remember the inequalities women have faced. Because of the strong women in the past, women today are able to participate in our society in the same way that men do. In Alberta we are truly honoured to have a rich history of strong women who fought for equal rights for women such as the Famous Five. The Famous Five were five Albertan women who came together with the same ideology of getting women equal rights. They were Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby. Each was a true leader in her own right, and three of them served as MLAs in this Assembly.

Separately, these women were champions of the rights and welfare of women and children. They worked hard and courageously in the face of the prejudices and resistance of the day. Together they formed an unstoppable force that changed the world for women in Canada and in all Commonwealth countries. They challenged the Canadian Constitution on who was seen as qualified persons as only qualified persons could be appointed to the Senate, which were men. But Emily Murphy found a provision in the Supreme Court of Canada Act that said that any five persons acting as a unit could petition the Supreme Court for an interpretation of any part of the Constitution.

So she gathered her group, which was known as the Famous Five, and petitioned the Supreme Court. This became known as the Persons Case, which they lost in the Supreme Court of Canada, but

when they took it to the Privy Council in England, they won. Because of women like the Famous Five, who fought for our rights, we can see generations of strong women in politics today and in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Policies and Women

**Member Irwin:** Today is International Women's Day. Last year at this time I called on this government to take tangible actions to address inequality, gender bias, and the very real challenges that women in Alberta face. Today the minister for status of women had an opportunity to stand up and defend her record and explain to the women of our province why her government left them out of the budget. Instead, we get silence. I wonder why.

This is a government that has shown repeatedly through their actions that women do not matter. This is a government that removed gender-based analysis because to them intersectionality is just a kooky theory, killed the \$25-a-day program that provided affordable early learning and child care for families of all income levels, froze the minimum wage, struck an economic recovery panel but only appointed two women to that 12-person panel, removed all metrics of accountability for women's economic participation from their business plans, laid off thousands of public-sector workers, the majority of whom are women, promotes a website called Women's Economic Security that lists the goals and actions of us, the previous NDP government, with links that haven't been updated since the UCP took power, and they cut funding to the ministry of status of women and multiculturalism at a time when multiple racialized women, specifically black Muslim women, have been attacked, and we've got a Premier who's failed to speak up and has failed to challenge racism.

1:40

Alberta women and gender-diverse folks deserve a whole lot better than the inactions of this government. The numbers are staggering. Women's economic participation has dropped to a level we haven't seen in this province in almost 40 years, and without action these numbers will continue to drop. We need a seat at the table because while the minister for status of women sits at the table, she clearly refuses to use her voice. On this side of the House we're here for Alberta's women, and on this side of the House we'll keep calling for real action to tackle gender inequality.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-West and the chief government whip.

### Traffic Safety

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sorrow that I rise in this House today to recognize and honour Sergeant Andrew Harnett, who was killed in the line of duty on New Year's Eve in Calgary from a reckless driver during a routine traffic stop. Sergeant Harnett spent 12 years with the Calgary Police Service. That's the same amount of time that I spent with the organization, and when I heard the news of the CPS officer who was killed in the line of duty while protecting Calgarians, I was left speechless and heartbroken.

I have often said that traffic stops are the greatest unknown threat that an officer can face on the job. Police officers leave the safety of their home each and every night and every shift to serve and protect. Incidents resulting from traffic stops, regrettably, happen far too often. Not even a month prior to this in my constituency of Calgary-West there was an incident where officers were responding to a vehicle driving erratically through the community. When

officers attempted to pull the vehicle over, the driver carelessly continued to speed up, eventually colliding in an upcoming intersection and taking the lives of two innocent pedestrians. When high-speed, reckless driving incidents that end in tragedy occur, Mr. Speaker, it leaves families without loved ones, and it is a grim reminder of how dangerous our roads can be.

I urge all drivers in Alberta to drive with caution, I urge them to slow down when they see first responders, and I urge them to be compassionate of our local officers, who are doing everything they can to protect and serve our community. Let us all learn from these horrific accidents and prevent them from happening in the future, Mr. Speaker. May we always remember to drive with awareness and caution and remember to slow down when we see the blue and red lights and, if they are meant for you, to slow down, stop, and co-operate. It will save lives.

Thank you for your service, Sergeant Harnett.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Economic Recovery in Calgary

**Ms Ganley:** Albertans are hurting. Going into this year's budget, that is one thing that is absolutely clear. Families, workers, small businesses are all struggling as we face this pandemic and the economic toll it has taken on our province, and that toll has fallen heavily on Calgary. Calgary is facing double-digit unemployment, and the number of empty office towers has hit record highs. The UCP ran on filling those towers, but two years in things are worse than ever, and this government has no plan. Instead, the Finance minister told the Calgary Chamber of commerce that it's not his problem. The pain being felt in Calgary and across the province should be the number one priority of this government. We need a plan that grows and diversifies our economy and, most of all, gets people back to work, but the UCP's so-called jobs plan in this budget is nothing but platitudes and buzzwords.

That's why we've been consulting Albertans about how to build a diversified economy and get people back to work through Alberta's future. We need a plan for downtown Calgary that builds towards the future, and any credible plan includes the green line, a project that would connect Calgarians to our downtown core and create 20,000 jobs. The budget presented an opportunity for the UCP to move forward on this transformational project; instead, all we get is deafening silence. Now more than ever we need a future-focused vision for Calgary and a plan to build a resilient economy that works for all Albertans. Meanwhile, when it comes to jobs that Albertans desperately need, this UCP government is missing in action.

### Member for Grande Prairie's Youth Council

**Mrs. Allard:** It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly this afternoon and speak today on International Women's Day. I'm honoured to serve as the first female MLA for the Grande Prairie area. With that honour comes the opportunity to be an example to other women and girls who carry leadership dreams themselves. I want to both inspire and support their confidence and their belief that those dreams can be achieved. I'm grateful for the strong women in my life who've gone before me, from family members like my mother, grandmother, and great-grandma to strong community leaders that have shaped me along the way. These mentors paved a path, instilling confidence and showing me that anything is possible.

One of my election commitments was to establish an MLA youth council to engage young people in the political process by supporting their understanding of our political system, engaging in issues-based discussions on current events, and providing opportunities for

mentoring among other leaders in Alberta from various backgrounds, including politics, business, education, and the not-for-profit sector. I believe that leadership is truly about raising up other leaders, and my youth council is one of the most rewarding experiences for me as an MLA as I watch these young leaders emerge.

The council is now in its second year of service, and I'm so delighted to take this opportunity today to congratulate my 2021 executive: Grace Larson, president; Malana Loxam, vice-president; and Xya Parashar, secretary. The executive this year just happens to be all young women, and I'm proud to work with them, learn from them, and support them in their personal development as they grow in their own leadership skill and capacity. Thank you to the remaining council members: Samuel Ergando, Josh Gazdag, Keelin McNeil, Nuray Omirbek, Terry Robins, Nidhin Sunil, Ava Driedger, Caden Morrow, Seth Bourke, Sydney Kinderwater, and Shubh Patel.

The council had the pleasure of meeting with the Minister of Finance this past weekend to discuss Budget 2021. The discussion was excellent, and the questions from this talented group of young people were very insightful. Thank you to my council for your engagement and your diligence. I am confident in our future when I survey the pool of talent in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Churchill Manor Health Concerns

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last week, two very concerning incidents have overlapped at the independent living retirement home called Churchill Manor in my constituency in Edmonton-Mill Woods. The first concern is that COVID-19 and one of its concerning variants have begun spreading through the residents and staff at this facility. It's now my understanding that at least 39 residents and eight staff have tested positive. The second was that mice had infiltrated parts of the building, and adequate removal of the vermin and their droppings was not being attended to. Families had reached out to me to ask for help, and they provided some truly horrific pictures of what this meant for the seniors living at the facility.

When I heard about these problems, I did what I hope any member here would do, I reached out to the government. I contacted the minister of seniors' office by both e-mail and phone, and I eagerly awaited a response, fearing deeply for my constituents' well-being the entire time and knowing that those families were worried, too. Unfortunately, over 24 hours later no response had come to me from the minister of seniors. At that point, while continuing to hear concerns from the family and friends of residents and staff at Churchill Manor, I felt that I had to take the matter public to try and put pressure on the government into action.

Only once I began speaking on this issue and sharing the awful photos through media and social media did the minister of seniors finally deign to reply, and even then only in vitriolic, combative Twitter replies. Even now I've yet to receive a telephone call or update of any sort from the minister or her office, something I have received many times from other members of this Executive Council while trying to resolve local issues on behalf of my constituents. Premier, this inaction and antagonism by one of your cabinet ministers is simply unacceptable. Your minister of seniors is unwilling to perform the duties and responsibilities; she should ask herself why she's in that role for the good of all seniors in Alberta.

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

#### Freedom of Speech

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are blessed with the right to several freedoms. In particular, under section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms we are blessed with the "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression," often referred to as freedom of speech. That right is given to all those living in Canada and is tied closely with other guaranteed freedoms such as religion. Citizens have a right to express themselves peacefully, particularly towards an elected government. This, of course, makes sense as a government is elected by the people and is responsible to the citizens it represents. Responsible protesting is one way that is done.

1:50

However, these citizens are also able to speak through their elected representatives in this House. Sometimes issues arise, and members may have to express the frustration of their constituents both here in the House and in their community, often through various forms of media. As representatives of our constituencies here in the Assembly, this is a vital part of our job. I and many other members take this responsibility seriously. Differing beliefs along with the ability to express and share them are a key to a healthy democracy. Here in this House we often have varying opinions and beliefs from not only our constituents but ourselves as well. We must remain free to do the job for which we were elected.

Party politics is an honoured tradition of the Westminster parliamentary system, and while members of any given party may join that party due to most of their ideas aligning, it is not uncommon for members to disagree on certain aspects of policy. Just as disagreement in this Assembly is healthy, Mr. Speaker, for a democracy, disagreement and debate within parties themselves are also a healthy way for democracy and the grassroots movement in particular to thrive. It is only through healthy debate and disagreement that we can have a better understanding of all perspectives and see sides of an issue that we have not yet explored ourselves.

Thank you.

#### Oral Question Period

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

#### Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and that was very timely. Right now we are in a race, the vaccine versus the variant. Even as our active cases come down, Alberta has seen nearly 600 variant cases, more than double Ontario, the next-closest province, on a per capita basis. Now is the time to be more cautious, not less, yet we have MLAs like Cypress-Medicine Hat joining the end-the-lockdown caucus, giving credence to antimaskers. Premier, why are you letting your MLAs undermine your own government's public health orders, orders designed, I assume, to keep people safe?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's called democracy.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans can and should have a free and reasoned debate about what restrictions are necessary to stop the spread of the virus, but the standards are higher for elected members of this House and in the government. The majority of Albertans, regardless of partisanship, expect two things from their government: one, that the laws passed to protect them are based on

science and medical fact; two, that everyone follows them, no exceptions. Premier, having your members challenge and subvert these laws is dangerous. Why are you failing to lead?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, everyone is equal before the law. The law applies to everyone. I'm not aware of – if the member has an allegation of subversion, that there are members of this place who are violating public health restrictions, then she should make us aware. What she really cannot tolerate is a diversity of opinion. That's why she threw people out of her caucus, for having the temerity to disagree with her. This government is committed to a policy protecting lives and livelihoods, controlling viral spread while limiting the damage of restrictions to our society but also recognizing that there is space for legitimate democratic debate on this question.

**Ms Notley:** In the face of a public health emergency there is space for following the public health laws. Mr. Speaker, after the embarrassing train wreck that we all observed over Christmas, where the Premier defended his beachfront MLAs and then later didn't, the Premier promised Albertans he would bring a, quote, culture of discipline to his caucus, yet it now seems that discipline is only something that matters when it comes to saving his own political career, not saving the lives of Albertans. Premier, setting aside calls for your leadership, why won't you discipline your MLAs for their reckless, antiscience, irresponsible disregard for the lives of Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP seems to have a hard time grasping the difference between a government policy and individuals representing the views of their constituents and raising questions. Unlike in the NDP, in the broader Alberta society we don't all think monolithically. There are various views on many different important questions, and what could be more important than this matter of life and death but also these policies which do impair constitutionally protected freedoms? I'm glad to live in a province where there is a strong and vigorous debate on such issues.

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

**Ms Notley:** I would have hoped that members of the government caucus think monolithically about science and about the law.

#### **Budget 2021 Impact on Women**

**Ms Notley:** Anyway, today as we recognize International Women's Day, we do so with the knowledge that this pandemic has impacted women far more than men. As of today StatsCan shows that more than 500,000 women across Canada are now unemployed, and RBC says that 100,000 have left the workforce permanently. That's 10 times the number of men leaving, yet this government's budget had no plan for women, and their speech did not mention women once. To the Premier: why not?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, just a week ago the Minister of Children's Services announced over \$120 million of direct cash support for parents coping with child care costs associated with the pandemic. We just delivered nearly half a billion dollars in direct financial support to 340,000 front-line workers, overwhelmingly women. She talks about RBC. That's the same bank which just projected that Alberta will lead the country in economic growth this year, with 6.4 per cent growth, while the NDP wants to keep the service industry shut down. That means putting tens of thousands of women out of work.

**Ms Notley:** Well, indeed, the Premier is right. He does talk about his \$500 child care cheque to parents, calling it central to getting people back in the workforce, but, golly gee, my hero. The truth is that that won't cut it. Why won't the Premier take International Women's Day to learn about the growing economic consensus around the imperative to our economy of truly universal, affordable, and accessible child care? A \$500 cheque ain't going to cut it. You could make a difference. Why won't you?

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:57.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP's commitment to the notion of universal free child care is just bunkum because she was the Premier of a majority socialist government for four years, and all they delivered was an censity-teensy, little pilot program which included subsidies for daycare for rich Albertans. That's not the right approach. We recognize and support the choices of all parents, yes, including those parents who have informal forms of child care.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when asked by the Calgary Chamber about the budget's plan for women in Alberta's economic recovery, the Finance minister said, quote, we know the service sector was disproportionately affected with public health restrictions, and the service sector is where so many of our female professionals work. The minister seems to have only one idea of how women contribute to the economy, and it revolves around his morning cup of coffee. When will the Premier recognize that we need a comprehensive economic strategy for increasing women's participation in all sectors of the economy, and when will we see something to get that done?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm confused because the leader of the NDP started by saying that we should refer to data to look at the impact of the COVID recession on women. The data is very clear that women are disproportionately employed in service positions, which have been disproportionately affected by the public health restrictions that the NDP wants reimposed. They opposed opening of hospitality businesses. They want to fire more women workers in Alberta. They are wrong to do so. This government's obsessive focus is on getting growth back in this economy to benefit women and men, people of all different backgrounds.

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

**Ms Notley:** Yet not one word in the budget.

#### **COVID-19 Outbreaks at Meat-processing Facilities**

**Ms Notley:** Now, the Premier ignored the impacts on women and vulnerable Albertans in the first wave, and he continues to learn nothing in the second. Just look at meat-packing plants, Mr. Speaker. Olymel has had more than 500 cases to date. Three employees have died; three others are in the ICU. Yet this plant reopened, leaving workers with no choice but to work in unsafe conditions. Premier, after JBS, after Cargill, how can you possibly fail these workers again? Clearly, we need a public inquiry. When will we have one?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to those, I believe, two workers, in fact, based on the corrected analysis of AHS, who had worked at that plant, who have passed away as well



as the other 1,900 Albertans who we've lost to this pandemic. The public health division of the central Alberta public health chief medical officer and his team together with Labour and Immigration, occupational health and safety, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have all been co-operating with both the union and the employer there to create the safest possible workplace in the future. We know what the NDP wants – they wanted it from the beginning – that we shut down all of those plants and put thousands of Albertans out of work.

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Wow. So not only does this Premier ignore these workers, he's now actively working to ensure none of them can seek recourse through the justice system. Thanks to the Health minister's online town hall we now know this government is working on legislation that might eliminate corporate liability in relation to COVID-19 illness and death to workers. Premier, are you truly planning to cover up the negligence that's occurred around these tragedies? Will you commit today that you will not bring any legislation into this House that would prevent workers and their families from pursuing their legal rights against negligent employers or negligent government members?

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

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the leader of the NDP would like to consult with her counterpart the leader of the NDP government in British Columbia, that brought forward legislation that ensures that massive increases in insurance premiums do not impair the ability of privately owned long-term care and seniors' residences from operating. We need those facilities now more than ever, and we are willing to take on board ideas, including from the NDP government in British Columbia, about how best to do that.

**Ms Notley:** Let's talk about other provinces, Mr. Speaker, because there have been outbreaks in meat-packing plants across the country, but only in Alberta have cabinet ministers told these workers personally that their workplaces were safe when they were not. Only in Alberta have infections reached the thousands. Only in Alberta have people died. I was there last week when the plant reopened. There was an ammonia leak, there were machinery problems, and the safety training was in English only. Premier, when will you start taking the lives of these workers seriously?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we take – that's just such classic, classic defamatory language from the NDP, suggesting that other Albertans, that those who happen to work in the government undervalue the human lives of workers. How dare they? It's always fear and smear, defamation and division. We expect nothing less from that leader.

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

### Keystone XL Pipeline Provincial Equity

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, last August the Finance minister was clear on the cost incurred from Alberta's stake in the Keystone XL pipeline. Quote: we as a government, Alberta's government, are investing \$1.5 billion this year on the construction of Keystone XL. To review: 2020, \$1.5 billion, yet in our budget Albertans are told the equity purchase is only \$380 million. Very different numbers. Albertans deserve to know the truth, and the only way they will get it is by seeing the actual written contract. Premier, will you finally release it?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, the contract between the government of Alberta and TC Energy has commercially sensitive provisions. We continue to work with the operator of the project, TC Energy, on determining the next steps in the future. There will, obviously, be some impairment reflected on the books, but – thank goodness – it will be a tiny fraction of the loss that this province encountered because of the NDP's reckless crude-by-rail deal, which was to spend multiple billion dollars to move 120,000 barrels a day for three years whereas Keystone XL would have moved 840,000 barrels for 30 years.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no commercial sensitivity. There's no project, sensitive or otherwise.

Now, last May the Premier promised Albertans the \$6 billion in loan guarantees wouldn't come into effect if KXL was cancelled by a new President because they wouldn't be triggered until the 2021 construction season. He said the money was, quote, not at risk, yet now the budget shows that on January 4, after the U.S. election, they handed over \$900 million in loan guarantees. Premier, did you not understand what you signed, or did they hide the deal from you, too?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we understand why the NDP is so angry about this, because they were always opposed to the Keystone XL pipeline. They actually sent MPs down to Ottawa, to Washington to fight against it under the previous administration. The leader of the NDP explicitly expressed her opposition to it just like her Finance critic attended protests against Northern Gateway. This government was elected to do everything possible to get pipelines built, and I'll tell you what. We're going to sue the U.S. administration to recover costs, and we hope the NDP will support us.

**Ms Notley:** Well, pretty much 90 per cent of that was not accurate but hardly surprising. This Premier continues to hide the facts. He continues to change his story. The fact is that he's lost at least \$2.5 billion and could still stand to lose the full \$7.5 billion. We don't know because he won't let us see the documents. Premier, if you are telling Albertans they need to send their kids into ridiculously overcrowded classrooms, that not every child can afford university, that 10,000 front-line health care workers have to lose their jobs and their pensions, well, don't you think Albertans deserve to see the real deal around the \$7.5 billion?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the leader there knows perfectly well that she is confusing the equity investment with \$6 billion of a loan guarantee that's not been drawn down on. She knows what the range of the impairment is, which is a fraction – a fraction – of the \$4 billion crude-by-rail boondoggle that she signed on to. You know, at the end of the day here's the deal. The U.S. administration slapped this country in the face by vetoing that project. We're going to sue them under NAFTA. Will the NDP support us or not? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has the call.

### Capital Plan

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government announced its capital plan. Taxpayers will invest \$20.7 billion over the next three years building schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, courts, and dozens of other projects across the province. We know that the capital plan continues to provide funding for critical projects already under way, including projects in my constituency

like the Grande Prairie composite high school and mental health beds in the new Grande Prairie regional hospital. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please highlight the new projects in this year's capital plan for the Assembly?

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

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my honour today to join the Premier, the Finance minister, and the Transportation minister to make the capital plan announcement. This year's capital plan will put 90,000 people to work over the next three years, and it will fund 41 brand new projects like 14 new schools, five new health care projects. The details will be known in the coming days. I want to assure all Albertans that we're protecting livelihoods as well while protecting lives.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that too many Albertans remain unemployed, even with governments at all levels doing their best to keep people working, and given that this budget sets out three clear goals – one, to support Alberta's economic recovery; two, to deliver government services as efficiently and effectively as possible; and finally, to invest in Alberta's health care – to the same minister: can you explain what your ministry is doing to respond to these objectives and how this capital plan aligns with them?

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

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. That's a very good question from my colleague. Albertans expect us to run an efficient government, which is why my ministry will see reductions to its operating budget over the next three years, but they also expect us to continue building world-class health care centres, which is why taxpayers are funding five new health projects, including the redevelopment of Rockyview hospital's ICU. Finally, Mr. Speaker, they know that we can't dig ourselves out of the hole without growing the economy, which is why we are creating 90,000 jobs with \$20.7 billion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opposition put out a news release claiming that the government was spending \$130 million less on the Calgary cancer centre and given that the Calgary cancer centre is currently the largest project under way at Alberta Infrastructure and cutting \$130 million from its budget could and would seriously change the scope and scale of this project and given that today the capital plan was announced, yet we didn't hear anything about a \$130 million cut from that project's budget, can the same minister tell the Assembly what's going on with the Calgary cancer centre?

Thank you.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very disturbing that the opposition alleges that \$130 million was removed from the Calgary cancer centre budget. The full \$1.4 billion allocated to this project remains in place, and the project remains on time and on budget. I don't know where the NDP gets their numbers, but I can tell you that the Calgary cancer centre will be a truly world-class facility serving all Albertans, and I want to commend the construction crew on the site that helped continue to keep it on pace throughout the pandemic.

2:10

## Budget 2021

**Ms Phillips:** Now, Mr. Speaker, a key element of this government's budget is the multibillion-dollar contingency fund that they claim is for COVID response, but the government has not allocated this fund to the Department of Health, you know, the people who would use it to handle a COVID response. Albertans are left to ask themselves: is this just the Finance minister's zero-accountability slush fund? Can the Minister of Finance commit that not a single dollar from this fund will be used for anything other than addressing the pandemic and keeping Albertans safe? Can he at least be that accountable to Albertans?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number one priority in Budget 2021 was to ensure that we were adequately resourcing Health to deal with the pandemic. We recognize that in the upcoming year, we don't know with certainty what those demands will be, and that's why we have established a 1 and a quarter billion dollar contingency, funding that will be available to Health as it's required.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the last economic recovery plan was hitting the accelerator on an already failed jobs plan that resulted in 50,000 jobs lost and double-digit unemployment and given that this budget claims to be supporting jobs today, jobs tomorrow by funding initiatives that are "still under policy development," can the minister explain why, after having a year to write himself some essays on economic diversification, he missed the deadline? Given that Albertans have already lived through the Redford government building signs and calling it jobs, why does the minister want to make Albertans relive that?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I failed to draw a question from the member opposite's comments, but I will say this. Budget 2021 has a key focus on economic recovery. It involves the foundational approach of creating the most competitive business environment possible to attract investment. It includes a \$20.7 billion investment in capital, in strategic infrastructure projects, and it includes a significant investment in sector strategies, positioning sectors that we believe we can be very competitive in to compete globally.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that the real tag line for this budget should be Dithering on Diversification given that the plans remain just that and given that the budget doesn't even book the expense for the multibillion-dollar boondoggle on KXL like the annual report said happened, in the past tense, in 2020, to the minister. The Premier said the deficit was \$14 billion. The budget claims it's \$18 billion. How much will it be by June? Does the minister even know?

**Mr. Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite to read the budget. That document has been actually out for almost two weeks. I would suggest that being the Finance critic, a good first step would be to read the budget. Again, we've laid out a three-year fiscal plan that will bring down Alberta's deficit and, most importantly, deliver cost-effective, taxpayer-respecting programs to the people of Alberta. We will bring down our cost of delivering government services to align with that of other provinces. That's a commitment.

### COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, in July of last year this government announced that they would commission a third-party report on the province's handling of the first wave of the pandemic. In August the government awarded a \$475,000 contract to KPMG. This report was designed to be a guide to help the government through the second wave of the pandemic, but as Alberta entered the clear second wave, there was still no report to be seen. The government told Albertans that we would see the report in early 2021. Minister, if this report was designed to help us through the second wave, which we are arguably well past, where is it?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a new situation that every country, every jurisdiction, and every province is going through. We wanted to move quickly on a review of our pandemic response, and Alberta is the only Canadian jurisdiction to have undergone an independent third-party review during the pandemic. The report is now being reviewed, and we will make it public once it's final. We expect that the review will help us to continue to learn from the response and to allow us to continue to react quickly to the pandemic.

**Ms Gray:** Given that this report would have looked at the province's responses while seniors' facilities were being inundated with surging cases and filled with overwhelmed staff and given that this report would have looked at the province's response when Alberta saw the biggest outbreak at a meat-packing plant in North America at Cargill, where workers died, and given that we have yet another plant outbreak at Olymel and so far three workers have died and given that this government has seemingly learned nothing about early intervention to limit these outbreaks or are willing to ignore the deadly consequences, Minister, will you finally release this report so that we can save lives, and do you have any idea how many would be alive today if the report had been released earlier?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, given that the member missed when I said that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada going through this type of a review and given that Alberta's government is also undertaking a review of facility-based continuing care, which is led by our colleague the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek – that review, on top of the pandemic response review, is going to identify opportunities to improve the lives of residents, to better support staff and operators, and to make better use of taxpayers' dollars, and that includes engaging with continuing care residents and their families. The committee has already heard from over 7,000 Albertans, and the review of that will be provided to us very soon.

**Ms Gray:** Given that the minister's argument seems to be, "We're the only ones trying, so it's okay if we fail" and given that this government promised this report in early 2021 and that we're now almost to spring and given that this government commissioned the report to be a guide through the second wave so that we don't repeat mistakes and given that we are now well through the second wave yet are seeing many, many mistakes made, to the minister: can you stand in this House and commit to releasing the report today if it's nearly complete, or are the mistakes your government has made so egregious that you are hiding a report that may have suggestions that run counter to the choices that your government has made?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised at all to hear the NDP cheering against Alberta. We have been leaders throughout the response to the pandemic and responding to COVID-19. We'll

continue to do so. As I said, we will be able to provide to Albertans and make public the review once it's in its final form and be able to continue to learn from that review as well as the review that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is doing on facility-based continuing care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has the call.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta announced a 6.2 per cent decrease in operating support for Alberta's postsecondary schools. The University of Lethbridge will see its 2021-22 operating and program support reduced by \$5.7 million, and Lethbridge College will see a \$2.7 million reduction. Meanwhile the university's infrastructure maintenance program will increase by \$2.8 million, and the college's will increase by approximately \$850,000. However, increases in capital funding cannot be used in other areas of their budgets. To the Minister of Advanced Education: are you willing to work with the universities and colleges to find efficiencies in their budget plans?

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

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to my colleague for the important question. The short answer is yes, of course. We're working very closely with our universities and colleges to find innovative ways to help them generate own-source revenue. One of the things that we're doing is looking at reducing red tape. Our institutions have a lot of red tape that we can clear up. That will allow them to be more innovative and entrepreneurial. As well, through the work that we're doing with Alberta 2030, we are looking at additional measures that will give them more flexibility, and we'll have more to say about that very soon.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. The Auditor General has reported since 2013 that the Department of Advanced Education must, and I quote: develop and communicate a strategic plan that clearly defines the minister's expected outcomes for taxpayer funding in universities. End quote. Given that funding for universities is being adjusted for all universities and colleges across Alberta, to the same minister: are all universities and colleges facing the same budgetary adjustments, or have adjustments been made on a case-by-case basis?

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

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer is that adjustments are being made on a case-by-case basis. We're looking at individual institutions and looking at their level of funding as they compare to one another not just within Alberta but also across the country, and we have seen huge funding disparity and discrepancy. We are doing that on a case-by-case basis. The member is right, as per the Auditor General's report as well, that our postsecondary system lacks an overall strategic plan and vision. We've been working for the last several months with our institutions and students to develop that, and we'll have more to say soon.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is funding postsecondary education in a responsible way that respects taxpayer dollars, provides students with greater value for their

investment, and ensures we continue to produce a skilled workforce for today and tomorrow and given that Alberta has some nationally and internationally respected postsecondary institutions like the U of L, once again to the minister: will you ensure that Alberta universities will continue to produce high-quality graduates and offer world-class instruction while also continuing to bring university funding in line with other institutions across Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

2:20

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is right. Indeed, the University of Lethbridge in particular is an incredible institution and recently received an outstanding award as one of the top undergraduate universities in the entire country, so my commendation to them on their excellent work. Of course, during these challenging times we need to do everything that we possibly can to help ensure that we set our students up for success when they graduate. It's why we're looking at developing that long-term strategic plan. We're taking a close look at work-integrated learning and other solutions that'll help our students get a leg up.

### Churchill Manor Health Concerns

**Ms Sigurdson:** The rapid spread of COVID-19 at Churchill Manor is tragic, and the current living situation is absolutely unacceptable. On Thursday I was joined by loved ones of residents at the home, and they shared appalling experiences and photos of mice infestation. This is absolutely unacceptable. They reached out to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and she alerted the Minister of Seniors and Housing, who did not respond. Minister, these Albertans and the residents deserve action and deserve answers. Your silence speaks volumes. Why did you ignore their concerns?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been no silence. AHS environmental public health has been made aware of the infestation and is working with the company to ensure that pest control is brought in. But a reminder that at this residence it's an independent living situation; it's not licensed. It's important to note that AHS does not oversee the day-to-day management of the facility, and I can confirm that the local health officials have been working closely with the facility to prevent further spread of the COVID variant.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, given that these are Albertans that need to be heard and given that the UCP promised to build a wall of protection around seniors from COVID-19 – yet the U.K. variant is spreading like wildfire through Churchill Manor; it was reported on Friday that the spread took place in a dining room that was opened in the middle of February, just a few weeks before the vaccines were administered – and given that Rose Zinnick, who said that she doesn't know if her father, who is a Churchill resident, is getting his meals delivered to his room or having his room checked, said that she wants to see someone held accountable, are you . . .

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, the safety, the health of seniors in our province is of utmost importance to us. I'd like to again reassure the people of this province that actions are being taken and that we take outbreaks of COVID and of variants of concern in particular and infestations seriously. As soon as the call was received, steps were taken immediately by AHS environmental public health, and we're going to continue to make sure that AHS has all the resources that

it needs, not just when it comes to COVID but all public health situations.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the incident at Churchill Manor is not an isolated event and that the concerns and fears of the residents, shared by many seniors during the pandemic, have revealed a lot of pre-existing problems in continuing care such as low staffing, lack of inspections, and seniors left in isolation and given that this reality is unacceptable and that we must learn from it, to the minister. We have called for a public inquiry a number of times. The situation in Churchill Manor proves why it's necessary. Will you do what Quebec and Ontario have already done and launch a public inquiry into continuing care?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, spreading fear to Albertans and especially to seniors that they are not being taken care of is, quite frankly, offensive to all those who are working tirelessly to ensure that they are healthy and that they are safe throughout the pandemic. [interjections] That's how the NDP is going to continue to behave, as they shout at me right now. They are going to continue to disrespect all of the work of everybody on the ground taking care of the people. The residents and the staff in those facilities: they're going to be our primary focus in the response to the pandemic, as they have been for the last year. We're going to continue to make sure that those operators and AHS have all the resources that they need for the remainder of the pandemic.

### Northwest Territories' Use of Alberta Curriculum

**Ms Hoffman:** The Education minister has botched her handling of Alberta's curriculum. She's invited the Premier's racist friends to hold the pen, and they want to erase indigenous content in favour of rote memorization about European kings. In response to this, the Northwest Territories is dropping the Alberta curriculum and moving to British Columbia content. Will the minister confirm to this House that our neighbours in the Northwest Territories are ending their use of the Alberta curriculum?

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

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I respond to the question, as it is International Women's Day, I want to thank all women in this Chamber, on both sides of the House, who work very hard to represent the voices of their constituents and also to ensure that we see more women elected at all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, with that, Alberta's future curriculum will include a broad and inclusive account of history, including black history and indigenous history. It will absolutely also address concepts, topics, and issues related to antiracism, particularly in social studies. This is a commitment the Minister of Education has made numerous times.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the question was on the NWT and are they going to continue using our curriculum, I'd appreciate it if the minister would table that response.

Given that the Northwest Territories have used the Alberta curriculum since the 1970s and given that educators, students, and families want a modern, 21st-century curriculum that teaches young people about the history of the place they come from, including the hard truths about colonialism and residential schools, what does the minister think it says about her approach to curriculum that her fellow Canadians want no part of it? Are you looking to other

provinces to modernize the curriculum for truth? It's not happening here.

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has been very transparent when it's come to the development of this new curriculum that will be rolled out. Alberta's future K to 12 curriculum will, as I said, include First Nations, indigenous, and Métis perspectives. This is not negotiable. We've repeated this several times, that the curriculum will include a broad and inclusive account of history, including indigenous history as well as black history. There are hundreds of people involved right across the province in this curriculum development process, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit members of the curriculum working groups.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that Alberta's curriculum used to enjoy a strong reputation in the Northwest Territories and around the world and given that schools in many other countries taught Alberta's curriculum to their young people, can the minister tell this House what other educational partners – we know it's already the NWT; I am happy to update this House on that – from around the country and around the world have expressed concerns with the UCP approach to curriculum and are planning on ending their long relationship with Alberta under this minister's leadership?

**Ms Schulz:** Mr. Speaker, here is what the Minister of Education did when it came to our curriculum, and it was based on the feedback of Albertans. What we did was end the NDP's closed-door, secretive curriculum review and brought in consultations to include a wider range of perspectives, and that includes subject matter experts. This is exactly what we committed to doing, and this is exactly what we are doing. All stages of the curriculum review process, including who is providing input, is available online at [alberta.ca/curriculum-development](http://alberta.ca/curriculum-development).

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

### **Budget 2021** (continued)

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The year 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a year of extreme loss, perseverance, and resilience. Alberta's Budget 2021 highlights the importance of supporting our children, families, seniors, and the vulnerable while also getting Albertans back to work. In addition, the budget ensures that the health system has the resources to continue fighting the COVID pandemic while also increasing the overall health spending. To the Minister of Health: what specifically will the \$1.25 billion be directed towards to fight the pandemic?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget '21 provides historic one-time funding of \$1.25 billion to ensure that the health system has the resources that it needs to continue to fight COVID-19. This is in addition to \$23 billion for Health, a \$900 million, or 4 per cent, increase, and it represents the largest single-year investment in health care in our province's history. The \$1.25 billion that the member mentions will be focused on priorities such as acute care, continuing care, testing, contact tracing, surgical backlog, PPE, and vaccine deployment.

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government has worked extremely hard to address the concerns of Albertans in the budget and given that the COVID pandemic has made many

things virtual – the need to modernize postsecondary institutions has become clearer – and further given that students are worried about life after graduation and their prospects in the job market, to the Minister of Advanced Education: what are the priorities of Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs, and how will it help prepare our students for the future job market?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta 2030 will do precisely that. It will help to strengthen skills for jobs. It will help to ensure that our students graduate from our excellent postsecondary institutions with the skills, knowledge, and competencies that they need to go on and develop successful and rewarding careers. We're looking at a number of initiatives in Alberta 2030, whether it relates to strengthening work-integrated learning. We're also looking at expansion of apprenticeship education in the province to create apprenticeships in new and emerging careers and professions as well as many other areas, and we'll of course have many other details to say very shortly.

2:30

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

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta's recovery plan focuses on creating jobs, building infrastructure, and diversifying our economy and is a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and given that our government has proposed \$3 billion in support of capital maintenance and renewal of public infrastructure, to the Minister of Infrastructure: what kind of projects are being developed, and how many jobs will they create?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. CMR projects create jobs doing work that isn't necessarily glamorous, but it will preserve our provincial buildings, hospitals, roads, and schools. These projects aren't fancy, but they're important. Fixing leaky windows, repairing roofs, fixing cracked cement: those are all important. So we are creating thousands of jobs with these projects because Albertans need to work now, and we are working with the federal government to fund these projects as well.

### **Antiracism Strategy**

**Member Irwin:** I was horrified to see the recent torch rallies in our two largest cities that aim to spread hate and fear. These disgusting demonstrations must be unequivocally condemned, and we must take action on racism. I'm absolutely heartbroken that multiple black Muslim women have been attacked in Edmonton. No woman should feel unsafe for simply being herself. Our leader wrote to the Premier, calling for a bipartisan committee to tackle racism so that every single Albertan can feel safe and loved in their communities. Will this government hear our call and create this committee? Yes or no?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much for the question. I also would like to say that this government unequivocally stands with the people of this province against racism, white supremacy. In 1986 I was subjected to that myself close to where I live in Chestermere, in Caroline, Alberta – there were the beginnings of a white supremacist group called the Aryan Nations – and was completely impacted, myself personally, at that time, being called an abomination. So I have personal, personal background into how important this is. We would love any opportunities to be able to

work collaboratively together because, truly, that's how we get through this.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** The call for a bipartisan committee came out of consultations with the National Council of Canadian Muslims following brutal hate-motivated attacks on black Muslim women in Edmonton. Many representatives that were involved in those conversations are actually watching question period today, and they know that we're asking this question. Our caucus is also going to meet with many of these representatives later. What can I tell them about why you and your government refuse to hear their call and refuse to take real action to combat racism in Edmonton and all across Alberta?

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Racism happens as a result of fear, division, finger pointing, and lack of action. The action that has been taken by this government includes not only Muslim women from this province but actually right across the province, in all of the beautiful, beautiful multicultural and minority groups that form the fabric of this province. Our province was built by multiple groups and multiple minority groups. Our very first mosque was built here, right here in Edmonton, with Ukrainians, Christians, and Muslims all together. That is the history of this province, and that's what we work together. I look very forward to continuing our engagement with these organizations.

**Member Irwin:** Given that our NDP government established an Anti-Racism Advisory Council – and the hard-working people chosen for that important council submitted recommendations to fight racism in our province months ago, and they've heard nothing from this government – and that this Premier continues to play politics by refusing to condemn those hateful torch rallies and by refusing to comment on the disgusting attacks against black Muslim women, to the minister. We need action. Will you stand here today and commit to releasing the recommendations of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council? If not, what are you hiding?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Mr. Speaker, action is doing things like naming the plaza outside of the Federal Building after Violet King Henry – a place now, when families come together, will be standing in the face of racism in a way that matters not only to our black communities, not only to our Muslim communities but to every single community that has ever been under this kind of absolutely despicable behaviour that has been put forward by white supremacist and racist people in this province – like human trafficking work that is being done on this side of the government, the no tolerance day for FGM, something that I actually brought up with that government on multiple occasions that was never taken care of.

### Live Events Industry

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the live events industry was the first to shut down due to COVID-19 and will likely be the very last to open. We have all turned to the arts during this pandemic, whether it's TV shows, movies, music, or even taking virtual museum tours around the world to see paintings and sculptures many of us would never have the chance to see. Our gig workers keep this industry moving, and they feel left behind by this

government. Minister, will you commit to have a consultation with for-profit live event workers, gig workers, and artists to find out how your government can support them through the remainder of this pandemic?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, this is a great question because I've actually already met with pretty much everybody in the industry and continue to have multiple, multiple round-tables. One thing I have to say about COVID: even with the crisis, with everything that we've all gone through, our level of engagement has probably quadrupled. I'm sure the opposition can probably attest to that, too. It's been really quite astonishing and amazing, the amount of work that has come out of this sector. We're working on a stabilize program right now to work with the live experience for that exact reason. I really appreciate the question and will continue to work with for-profits as well.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that Alberta's live experience sector contributed \$662.7 million to the province's GDP and supports nearly 15,000 jobs and given that most summer art events would need to start planning for this year now and given that most festival organizers or live events cannot access federal supports because of this government's public health guidelines, Minister, will you commit to develop a support program to help these gig workers and small businesses through the pandemic since we know that they cannot open for some time?

**Mrs. Aheer:** I'd like to make one correction, Mr. Speaker: they're not able to access it not because of the protocols in this province. That's completely false.

Actually, what we're working on is a stabilize program with the sector right now, but that actually takes the work of working with them, to collaborate with them. We're not: go and tell them how to spend their money. This is about – and every single part of the sector: as the member knows, it's a really diverse group of people with a lot of different issues right across the sector. We've been really honoured to work with them. A lot of the work we're doing is a result of those consultations with those organizations. We'll continue to have them.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that this government launched the stabilize program without consultation of the live event sector, that left a lot of gaps in the qualifications for the program to actually support them, and given that the stabilize program even leaves out many of the nonprofit festivals and events due to lease qualifications and given that this program completely ignored arts groups that contribute to our economy but not sports groups, Minister, will you address the letter I sent to you and reassess the stabilize program to include all live event professionals?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Well, I'm happy to repeat what I just said, Mr. Speaker. Like I was saying, the sector is very diverse and extremely important to the GDP of Alberta, and we have reached out. In fact, the live sector stabilization was as a result of direct consultation, so if I could please correct again the record of this member, who continues to put information through that is not correct. Not only that, it's been actually that live sector that's helping us to understand also what needs to go on for the for-profit and the other sectors as well. It's just a beginning. We have along way to go – I understand that – but we'll keep working together with the sector.

Thank you.

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

### Chartered Surgical Facilities

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government and its health partners announced an expansion plan to provide 55,000 more scheduled surgeries starting on April 1. With the backlog of surgeries due to the impact of COVID-19 expected to be about 36,000 procedures by the end of March, this announcement is expected to ease the backlog and give Albertans the opportunity to get surgical treatment sooner rather than later. To the Minister of Health: how many facilities will be used for these surgeries, and will the government be providing funding to these facilities to help them meet the increased demands?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are more than 40 of these chartered surgical facilities in Alberta – 43, I think, to be specific – that provide publicly funded surgeries in Alberta under contract with AHS. And as the member mentioned, Budget '21 will support the health system to provide more than 55,000 additional publicly funded surgeries to help address the backlog that was caused by the pandemic. We're working with these chartered surgical facilities to determine which facilities can offer additional surgeries right now, and this would include existing and new chartered surgical facilities and facilities that don't have contracts with AHS but may have capacity in their operating rooms.

2:40

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that a day doesn't go by where rural Albertans from the north are not driving into Edmonton or Calgary for a procedure or surgery and given that the road goes in both directions and that most Albertans would be more than happy to come into northern Alberta communities for procedures if there is less wait time, to the same minister: will you be using existing surgeons and facilities in north rural Alberta to help address this backlog in surgeries, and will Albertans be able to visit any facility across the province that they choose?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the surgical recovery plan the focused surgical sites will begin to immediately ramp up and to support elimination of the backlog and enhance surgical access to folks. These sites will be in Banff, Edson, Innisfail, the Royal Alex in Edmonton, and, in northern Alberta, Peace River. Although patients won't be able to select where their surgery could be scheduled, all surgical strategies are focused on the patients and patient driven. Patients will have the option to have their surgery scheduled at any of these sites.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that these facilities provide safe, low-risk surgeries without cost to patients, which allows the hospitals to focus on emergency and more complex surgeries as well as COVID cases, and given that the reason for expanding to these facilities is to avoid any strains on hospitals and surgical sites to COVID, once again to the minister: what are the criteria for a surgery to take place in a hospital rather than in a chartered surgical facility, and who will be making the decisions?

**Mr. Shandro:** A great question, Mr. Speaker. It's the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta who determines which surgical procedures can be performed at a chartered surgical facility. There are many different types of procedures that can be performed at the CSFs, depending on the type of facility and the accreditation that's granted by the CPSA. Generally more complex procedures such as neurosurgery are performed in hospitals while the lower risk procedures such as cataract removal can be done safely in a CSF. This distinction is made for quality and safety purposes, as established by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for question period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of Members' Statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

#### Social Workers

**Ms Sigurdson:** This week is Social Work Week in Alberta. I am a social worker myself and, on behalf of the NDP caucus, want to thank all social workers for their service to the province. I'm honoured to speak about social workers on International Women's Day as 85 per cent of the profession is women. Sadly, the UCP government has shown time and time again that they do not support the values and service of social workers. With austerity budgets like the one released last week social workers will be expected to do more with less, even as the needs of those we serve increase.

This budget, which continues to rely on trickle-down economics, will result in increased hardship for Albertans. Major policy decisions of the UCP, like the \$4.7 billion handout to corporations, increase the income gap. Alberta has the widest gap of any province in Canada, and we know that a thriving middle class and less income inequality are earmarks of a healthy society. Under this government greater inequality is being created.

Besides these misguided policies the UCP is taking focused aim at workers. They are firing 11,000 front-line workers in health care. They're attacking employment standards and labour legislation so that public servants have reduced supports. Many social workers work in the public service and are represented by AUPE and HSAA. Both of these unions are under attack by the UCP.

Social workers serve Albertans with mental health challenges. Before the pandemic we had an opiate crisis; now that crisis is worse. We know that 85 people have died monthly from COVID-19 since its inception. What is not as well known is that 90 people have died monthly from opiate overdoses. The UCP has foolishly focused on recovery and not harm reduction to address the issue. The evidence is clear: harm reduction methods save lives. All social workers know this, and so should the associate minister of health.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

#### Silent Santa Initiative for Seniors in Camrose

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, COVID-19 has been hard for all of us, especially our seniors. Even prior to COVID, seniors experienced high levels of loneliness and poverty.

Across the province I know that there are wonderful individuals who give back to seniors in their community. I wanted to draw attention to Pat and Trevor, the owners of Harley's Liquor in Camrose. Every year for the past six years they have hosted an event which they call Silent Santa. The Silent Santa initiative is

dedicated to seniors. Four agencies – Service Options for Seniors, the Bethany Group, Camrose Home Care, and Camrose and District Support Services – all provide anonymous names through individual code numbers to Pat and Trevor. The couple then make cards for each individual senior in our community who may be alone or in need. Inside each card a suggestion is written, which states what that particular individual may like or need. Just after Remembrance Day, when Pat and Trevor put up their Christmas tree in their store, they hang those cards on the tree. As customers come in, they can take a card, go buy the item suggested, bring it back, and wrap it. Then Pat and Trevor deliver the gifts to each facility, to be given to seniors.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this past Christmas they delivered nearly 400 gifts to seniors in my community. The couple anticipate that more gifts will be required as they intend to support more agencies. This is one of the many things that happen in my constituency which support and give back to seniors. Through initiatives like these we are all brought closer together to help one another.

Pat and Trevor, your dedication to the community is commendable. Thank you for continuing to serve as an inspiration to all of us, allowing us to remember to give back and support each other. And thank you to the amazing people in the Camrose constituency who look forward to supporting this amazing cause every year.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time I will be moving the following pursuant to Standing Order 30.

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the fact that Alberta has the highest number of per capita variant cases in Canada, saw a record number of new variant cases on March 7, and efforts to fight this are undermined by contradictory government caucus communications about the efficacy of public health measures, interference with evidence-based decision-making during a public health emergency, and lack of transparency around public health recommendations and COVID-19 modelling.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Decore I rise to table a copy of a briefing note. It was discussed this morning at the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills. It's a briefing note that was delivered to the President of Treasury Board and Finance. It outlines a serious negative reaction from members of the public to changes the government made through Bill 22.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Opposition House Leader, I'm just confirming if you tabled the required number of copies for the SO 30.

**Ms Gray:** They're still on my desk.

**The Speaker:** Perfect. Thank you. If you can pass those to the page.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College of Paramedics annual report 2019-2020.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Insurance Act the Alberta Automobile Insurance Rate Board annual report for the year ended December 31, 2020.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 1:57 the Government House Leader raised a point of order, which he later withdrew.

2:50

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Commonwealth Day 2021

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw members' attention to a special occasion. Today is the second Monday in March, which marks a very special day for this institution as we join 180 parliaments and Legislatures around the world in celebrating Commonwealth Day 2021.

It should also be noted that today is International Women's Day, so it is fitting to recognize the outstanding contribution and work of all women who've provided such valuable efforts across the Commonwealth and here at home.

This year's theme, Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming, seems fitting in the midst of a global pandemic. We have all had to transform our way of thinking in order to come up with innovative ways to connect with one another over the past year. In her Commonwealth Day statement Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II talks of how we have learned over the past year to transcend boundaries and dissolve any sense of distance to keep connected. Copies of her statement have been made available to members of the Assembly.

I had the honour of connecting with our Commonwealth colleagues last week during a presentation and a panel discussion on the role that social media plays in connecting with people in spite of distance. These challenging times have illustrated just how important it is to communicate effectively when our in-person interactions have been limited. It is fitting that the Commonwealth parliamentary communications network was also launched today. I join the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt. Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP, in his endorsement of this forum, which will allow our communications staff to exchange ideas and best practices with colleagues throughout the Commonwealth.

Please join me in celebration of Commonwealth parliamentary day 2021.

### Request for Emergency Debate

**The Speaker:** With that, we will move to Standing Order 30. The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

### COVID-19 Variant Cases in Alberta

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I rise to speak to the Standing Order 30 motion that I read into the record earlier. This matter is one of the highest importance and urgency to Albertans. It's been one year since COVID-19 struck our province. Thousands were infected, and nearly 2,000 Albertans



have tragically lost their lives to this disease. Our condolences and thoughts are with all.

We have heard from Alberta's chief medical officer of health time and time again that we need to work together to get through this pandemic. Alberta has the highest number of variant cases per capita in Canada, and even more concerning is the record increase in variant cases that we saw on Sunday. Alberta has 13.66 variant cases per 100,000, with the next-highest province being Ontario, with 5.96 cases per 100,000.

We need to all be pulling together to ensure that we protect Albertans from this pandemic, but we see that rather than working together, members of the government caucus are actively undermining the public health orders. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Deputy Speaker both joined a campaign that calls for the end of public health measures. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat even joined in on protests that were, in part, against the current public health measures. The members for Brooks-Medicine Hat, Central Peace-Notley, Lacombe-Ponoka, and the Government House Leader have . . .

### Speaker's Ruling Speaking to Urgency

**The Speaker:** Member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, the purpose of our discussion at present is not to outline every activity that may or may not have happened in the past but to state the urgency with which the House should consider the very important role of setting aside all other business to debate one issue. If you can help this process by pointing your comments to what the urgency is, I'm sure that that will add.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much for your guidance, Mr. Speaker.

### Request for Emergency Debate (continued)

**Ms Gray:** Certainly, I have heard from Albertans how urgent this is and how concerned they are about the behaviours described, and the others – I will skip through the notes.

Albertans do deserve to have this debate, Mr. Speaker. I will point the attention of the Speaker to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 700, which states that a request for leave to discuss a matter of urgent public importance cannot be used as a means to debate a matter that will come before the Assembly in other ways. One of the reasons why I believe this is an urgent issue that should be allowed to have a debate now is because, at the time of notice being provided to you and the Government House Leader this morning in accordance with the standing orders and direction from your office, there was no opportunity currently on the Order Paper to discuss this important topic, nor has the Assembly debated this topic during the Second Session of the 30th Legislature. This is a topic of urgent public importance that has not been debated in the Assembly before, and there is no opportunity coming up that would allow for this House to debate other than with this motion.

I would as well call the attention of this Assembly to *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, point 387 on page 113, which states that an emergency debate “must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.” Clear, consistent communication to the public is surely within the administrative competence of this government. This is the first opportunity for the members of this Assembly to consider and debate these critical issues, issues that are of huge importance to Albertans given the volume of correspondence I and my colleagues

have been receiving and the great deal of concern that we see regarding the behaviours earlier described. This is urgent, that the government address these issues, and it's important that all members have the opportunity to debate this motion.

With that, I will conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, to be clear, the opposition has put forward a request to set aside today's private members' business, important business, in order to proceed with a debate that they say is a matter of urgent public importance. The debate of urgent public importance, not the issue: that's important to note.

Let's remember some of the rules for such a debate under the standing orders of this Assembly. I will refer you, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Order 30(7). I'm only going to discuss three points under the standing order in the interest of time, but underneath that standing order an emergency debate motion

is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration; . . .
- (c) not more than one matter may be discussed on the same motion; [and]
- (d) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter that has been discussed in the same session pursuant to this Standing Order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I address part (a), I want to highlight that I think the opposition has contravened part (c), because they have attempted to raise multiple matters in the same motion. Further, this may be out of order given part (d) as I note a similar emergency debate was granted on March 16, 2020, which was in the same session. I should say that the opposition may have also forgotten the ample debate time provided by the government in this session of the Legislature for members to ask ministers about the department's response to COVID-19 on several occasions.

I also note *Beauchesne's* 390 states the following:

“Urgency” within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means “urgency of debate”, when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

For those following along at home, the opposition had question period today to raise the issues, and they have six hours of estimates tomorrow with the Minister of Health scheduled alone as well as question periods in the days to come. I will note, Mr. Speaker, they chose to only raise COVID once and to spend their time in that question period attacking members of this place.

Now, allow me to address some of the matters raised that are not lining up with Standing Order 30(7)(a). This province continues to be a leader in Canada in our response to the pandemic. We have been a leader in testing and tracing, and we were the first province to complete vaccinations in continuing care, with the result of deaths dropping 90 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's – I know you're going to ask about urgency.

**The Speaker:** What's going to happen is that the Speaker is going to rise and you're going to stop talking, and then I will tell you what I am going to say. I don't think I need the Government House Leader to tell me what he thinks I might say. But I did provide some caution to the House leader of the opposition, and it's reasonable that I provide you a similar caution and encourage you to speak to the urgency of the matter, not debate the question at hand.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to debate the question at hand. Showing the differences that have changed with COVID-19 since the last time that this was discussed, I will say that the day-to-day fluctuations, when it comes to new variants, which was pointed out by the Official Opposition as a reason for this debate, went from 50 new variants yesterday to only six identified today, a changing situation. Currently about only 7 or 8 per cent of the active cases are the new variant whereas other provinces are looking at 30, which is not aggressive growth, concerning but not aggressive growth inside the situation. You know the changes as well, Mr. Speaker, that have taken place with the vaccination, which do change the conversation since the last time that this House looked at it.

I will close with this. We do not need an emergency debate in this Chamber. We certainly do not need this motion to be granted to stop the important work of private members in this Chamber. What we need is the federal government to deliver on their promises for vaccinations, we need to continue to stand with our health care workers as we get those jabs inside their arms, and we need to keep following our health guidance as we work towards getting back to normal this summer.

**The Speaker:** Thank you for your interjections.

Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods made a request under Standing Order 30(1) for "leave to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss," and I quote, the fact that Alberta has the highest number of per capita variant cases in Canada, saw a record number of new variant cases on March 7, and efforts to fight this are undermined by contradictory government caucus communications about the efficacy of public health measures, interference with evidence-based decision-making during a public health emergency, and lack of transparency around public health recommendations and COVID-19 modelling.

3:00

Notice of this intention was brought forward to my office at 11:16 and therefore has met the requirements to provide at least two hours' notice prior to this afternoon's sitting. I am now prepared to rule whether the request for leave is in order.

I, like the Opposition House Leader, would like to draw your attention to page 698 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which states that the request for an emergency debate will be evaluated by the Speaker in part based upon whether there are any other means to bring the matter forward within a reasonable time. We had the opportunity to have a question period. We will have more debate in the coming days ahead of the Assembly, both here inside question period as well as through the committee process. Now, the pandemic is a very serious issue, but the request for an emergency debate is intended for situations where, due to the urgency of the matter, there is no other means to bring the issue before the Assembly within a reasonable time.

I would highlight a couple of other concerns that the Speaker has with respect to the Standing Order 30 that has been requested, specifically with respect to the comments that the Official Opposition House Leader made around the administrative competence of the government. Her request states that the efforts to fight this are undermined by the contradiction of government caucus communications about the effectiveness of the public health measures. It is very difficult for your Speaker to make the assertion that a view of a government caucus member or a communication that they might make is, in fact, under the administrative competency of the government.

In fact, I will quote for you, as I did on the day that I became Speaker, a quote from Betty Boothroyd, the illustrious Speaker of

the House of Commons. "You've got to ensure that the holders of an opinion, however unpopular, are allowed to put across their points of view," and to imply that the government can control the view of any individual member of this Assembly certainly is unlikely and possibly a breach of privilege in its own right.

I will, though, say that an emergency debate did take place in this Assembly last March around a very similar topic, yet different with respect to the issue of variants. For these reasons, I find that this question does not meet the threshold of an emergency debate. It will not be heard. We will not proceed with the debate, and as such we are at Ordres du jour.

## Orders of the Day

### 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 Committee of the Whole to order.

## Bill 205

### Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A1. I see the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today we are debating Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. The importance of this bill should go without saying. The last time I was in the Chamber rising to this bill, I spoke at length about my interactions with the people in Rwanda and Congo and the genocide there. It left an impression on me, so much so that I brought that story to us here in the Chamber. I wish to do something similar again today. This bill is incredibly important, and for that reason I want to move an amendment.

I move that amendment A1 to Bill 205, Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act, be amended by striking out all the words after "be amended in section 2(b)(iv)" and substituting the following: by striking out "to increase awareness of genocides that have occurred across the world, including the following" and substituting "to increase the awareness of genocides recognized by the House of Commons of Canada" and by striking out paragraphs (A) through (G).

Madam Chair, should I proceed or wait for the distribution?

**The Chair:** Just give me a minute.

Hon. members, this is a subamendment to amendment A1. This will be known as SA1.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Williams:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Effectively, what my suggestion and this amendment will do is to make the comprehensive list of genocides that we are recognizing in this bill synonymous with what the House of Commons, our federal government, recognizes through Parliament. Over the past decade the House of Commons has recognized ...

**The Chair:** Hon. member – sorry – can you just read the amendment into the record first?

**Mr. Williams:** I will do that. Yes, ma'am, I will. That amendment A1 to Bill 205, Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and

Prevention Month Act, be amended by striking out all of the following words after “be amended in section 2(b)(iv)” and substituting the following: (a) 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,” and (b) striking out paragraphs (A) through (G).

As I was saying, Madam Chair, the House of Commons has recognized a number of different genocides over the past decade: the Armenian genocide in 2004; the Ukrainian famine, the Holodomor, which we know here in Alberta because of the very strong Ukrainian heritage in our communities, recognized in 2008; the Holocaust, recognized in 2003; the Rwandan genocide, which I spoke to a few months ago, recognized in 2008. The list goes on. Most recently we have added the Uighur genocide. The House of Commons voted unanimously on February 22 in favour of a motion recognizing the genocide currently taking place in China.

Now, a special subcommittee on human rights of the House of Commons has prepared a report, which I encourage all members of the House to read. I want to highlight a few of the different issues that they point out that are of grave concern.

Members of this House will know that I'm an avid traveller. In my youth, before I joined the Legislative Assembly, I visited China, the communist state in east Asia which is currently perpetrating this genocide. While I was there, I had the opportunity to visit the state of Xinjiang, known locally as east Turkestan. This is the province in which we find the majority of the Uighur population, and it is there that I had the experience in the Urumqi riots of 2009. I was locked in as I entered the city of Kashgar. Soon afterwards the communist state had locked down all interactions of all kinds. There was no ability for me to telephone home to let my family know that I had arrived from Pakistan safely. There was no ability for me to communicate what was going on. There were military columns walking down every street. There was an absolute prohibition on any public gatherings. This included on the Friday that I was there in the mosque in Kashgar, where the local population, the Uighur ethnic group, who are predominately Sunni Muslim, couldn't gather. This was for one reason and one reason only, to suppress the ability for them to live their lives fully.

3:10

Now, what I witnessed wasn't a genocide. I was there in 2009. It was a tragedy. It was a gross abuse of human rights. It was something that every member of this Legislature, I believe, would agree with me should be condemned. Since then we have seen escalations from this communist state, and it's very concerning what we have found.

One aspect of this has been mass detention and inhumane treatment. Now, many of us saw the images on social media over this last year of some of these detention centres being started: individuals, Uighurs, hooded in black masks, not told where they're going, taken away from their family members, kidnapped very often. While in these concentration camps, they're forced to do labour for the financial benefit of the Chinese state, where their goods are sold internationally, including in Canada. One of the recommendations of the special subcommittee on human rights for the House of Commons is that Canada not participate in buying any goods that are from Uighur forced labour, and I think that is terribly important. The inhumane treatment while they are in these concentration camps includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, being forced at gunpoint by Chinese Communist military and state authorities.

The fear of getting kidnapped at night is real. I'll read one example of a young lady who, according to her religious commitment as a Muslim, went on the hajj pilgrimage to Saudi

Arabia, as she is compelled to do in the five pillars of Islam. Upon returning, they went to her father's home, kidnapped him and took him away, confiscated her passport because this young lady decided to exercise her religious freedoms by going to Saudi Arabia on the hajj pilgrimage, which is of the highest importance for those of the Muslim faith. This is one example that is reproduced time and time again in Communist China.

We are so lucky in this country to have freedom of religion, to respect it and to fight for it in a meaningful, substantive way. What they have in that country has absolutely run roughshod over the most fundamental freedoms that any just and democratic or free society requires, the ability to choose what you believe and how you worship. It relates to us in the most fundamental way as humans, and the Communist Party of China forbids it. They forbid it, and they systematically root it out.

The abuses continue, Madam Chair. It's not just the mass detention and the forced labour, the inhumane treatment, the abuse of human rights; it's a pervasive surveillance state as well, well documented, absolute monitoring of all actions that could in any way threaten the state. A thought crime can exist in China. If you so much as believe something of a different faith or of anything contrary to the communist direction of the central party, you can be kidnapped, you can be taken away, and you can be put into these forced labour camps.

It doesn't end there, Madam Chair. Sadly, this genocide is a true genocide. There's the taking of life, there is the rooting out of this population, of this ethnic group, systematically coerced by the state government. The forced sterilization of many women, when they're kidnapped, happens on a regular basis. The birth rate of Uighurs since 2015, about the time this began, has plummeted to negative numbers. They are exterminating a population through the most sinister, Machiavellian machinations that we have seen, and if we do not condemn this as a society, as a culture, as a Legislature, and thus as a province, this will be adopted by other states and other jurisdictions, and it will continue, a silent genocide of making sure that future generations don't exist.

One such witness, Ms Jelilova, that we heard at the House of Commons subcommittee on human rights, said this. After being kidnapped and refusing to sign papers she didn't understand, she was told the following. This is her testifying to the subcommittee.

I entered inside and they started immediately taking samples of my blood and urine. I was stripped naked, and after that they gave me the yellow-coloured uniform. On the same day, I was put in shackles which weighed five kilos . . . They were taking samples of my urine to check whether I was pregnant or not. If I was pregnant, then they would do an abortion on the spot or take me away to the prison.

Forced abortion, Madam Chair. They will not allow family members to have children. They will not allow the Uighur people to continue. This is tragic, this is a genocide, and this is the ending of a population and the taking of lives.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and happy International Women's Day to everybody.

This is, of course, my first time speaking to debate this week and in many months. As I always like to do, I think we should acknowledge that we are, you know, a year into this pandemic, and we must absolutely give a shout-out to our front-line workers, our health care workers, our essential workers, everybody who has done such an incredible job after a gruelling many, many months. Thank you to all, to any of them who are watching on this Monday afternoon.

Thank you as well to the member for his subamendment. I serve on the private members' bills committee with a number of other folks, who will also be speaking to this bill today. It's been a while since we've had an opportunity to discuss this bill. Of course, referring to the member's subamendment, I want to just talk about some of the points that we've raised and why we really need to take some time to consider what message we're sending, what message this private member is sending with this bill, and we were unable. We were unable when we sat in the that private members' bills committee meeting to push the government to reconsider a number of elements of this bill, and I'm going to talk about what some of those are.

You know, we've all been very clear. No one in this Chamber, I know, denies the fact that condemning and acknowledging genocide is very much an important thing, and we need to talk about it. We absolutely need to talk about it. We need to raise awareness. We need to use this as an educational opportunity.

I can't help but think back to my days teaching high school social studies. Genocide is actually something that is explicitly mentioned in the grade 11 social studies 20-1, 20-2, 20-4 curriculum, and students actually delve into genocide, delve into ultra-nationalism. They delve into the causes of genocide. You know, even at the K to 12 level, students are starting to learn about this, and they're actually asked to explore some of the examples of genocide as well. So I think it's a good step that we're talking about this and that we are debating it.

I need to highlight, though, a couple of the concerns, and this, again, relates to some of the member's previous comments. When we sat in that committee meeting, the member was very focused on his notes and not straying from them one bit. I recall quite clearly that we asked that member about who he had consulted, what background work had been done by that member to arrive at the content in the bill in front of us, and he was unable to name, to list any groups that he had spoken with. Instead, he referred back to the House of Commons debate and discussion on this and nothing else. Nothing else. We were alarmed on this side of the House that with, you know, a piece of legislation that's so important and – let's be honest – so sensitive as well, there hadn't been background work done, that there hadn't been extensive consultation with any groups impacted.

What was interesting, too, is that I recall that member talking about the fact that, you know, things change and that definitions change, and that seemed to me to just highlight the need for more work on this bill, more consultation, further discussion.

**3:20**

One of the things that was most troubling to members of the committee on our side of the House was the fact that the bill failed to acknowledge any of the impacts on indigenous people. It failed to acknowledge the extremely real and tragic ongoing crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks. No mention of that whatsoever. No mention of the '60s scoop. No mention of the impacts, the ongoing intergenerational trauma and the impacts, of residential schools as well.

I can't help but need to spend some time on that first point, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks. It's not lost on me that today is International Women's Day and that this is an opportunity for all of us in our analysis to be intersectional and to acknowledge the very real experience of those women and their families. I think about normal times, you know, in a non-COVID era, about where I would be on International Women's Day. I'd be marching with folks of all genders and rallying.

It was at one of those rallies many years ago that I first met my friend Dorothy Dene, who shared with me the story of her niece Shelly, who's just one of thousands of missing indigenous women across this country. It is absolutely a genocide, and it is absolutely something that all of us should be talking about, should be elevating. I think of Shelly, and I think of the countless other women and their families who don't have answers, and what an opportunity we have in this House to highlight this crisis and to raise awareness for those women and their families. What a message that could send about action. We know – and I know my colleague the critic for Indigenous Relations will be speaking about this as well – that this government has pledged to take action on those calls to action, yet we've not seen any action to date. I'm hopeful – I'm hopeful – we'll see action in the next few months, but we haven't seen it yet. We haven't seen it yet.

I also recall, when I sat in committee, going back through some of the documents that that private member referenced, and he, you know, referenced the House of Commons debate and some of the definitions that they've landed on. I noted that the work that he was referencing was all prior to the national inquiry, the final inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It was prior to that. I believe it was in 2015 that a lot of this debate took place, which was also prior to the final report of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So two pivotal reports released, that were built very much with indigenous voices, happened after a lot of this House of Commons debate. Again, it's disingenuous of this government to introduce this subamendment, that doesn't acknowledge the real history of this land that we call Canada, and I think it does a grave disservice to the First Peoples of our land if we're not acknowledging and recognizing their experiences.

You know, we can't forget the fact that we've seen from this government – and this is why I need to bring this up. We've seen, sadly, a track record from this government of ignoring that very real history. We saw that. I can give countless examples. I won't, in the interest of time, but we saw that, for instance, with Chris Champion and Paul Bunner and folks like that, who very much ignored residential schools.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment SA1? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank all my colleagues for expressing their thoughts. I thank as well the Member for Peace River for introducing this subamendment. Let me express my support for the subamendment as this will make clarity in the bill by providing this simpler wording in the particular subsection and better accomplish its purpose, which seeks to increase awareness of genocide. By removing the list and simplifying the wording, it creates a wider latitude as it will include all the genocides that would be recognized by the House of Commons of Canada in the future.

Just recently, Madam Chair, the House of Commons has unanimously recognized the suffering of the Uighur and Turk Muslims as being genocide carried out by the People's Republic of China, calls upon the International Olympic Committee to move the 2022 Olympic Games if the Chinese government continues this genocide, and calls on the federal government to adopt this position. We must do everything we can to promote education about genocide. We need to promote more knowledge about genocide so that we can ensure our younger generations are informed about the past. In doing so, we respect those who still feel the effects of genocide today and acknowledge their experiences.

During the June 2019 hearing on the Roma by the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights Ms Dafina Savic, who is the founder of Romanipe, a Montreal-based

not-for-profit organization that fights discrimination against Roma world-wide, shared in her opening remarks:

Recognition of the Romani genocide is highly important since the human rights . . . of Roma and the hatred and racism against Roma remain very normalized forms of racism today given that the history of the Romani people, specifically during the Second World War, remains largely unknown and unrecognized.

During the Second World War, rhetoric portraying Roma as criminals was used by Nazis and their collaborators to justify the mass murder of at least half a million Romani people. Across European countries today, unfortunately we see that rhetoric being repeated. In many European countries, physical walls have been built to separate Roma from non-Romani citizens. These walls are not at borders but have actually been built within cities to separate Roma from non-Romani citizens.

She went on to share about the violent attacks, hatred, and racism against Roma in countries where the community exists and concluded by saying that the world has not reacted as much as expected to this unbearable treatment they are facing, because, according to her,

one of the most normalized forms of racism today is actually the violence committed against Roma, which is unfortunately based on the belief that Roma are fundamentally criminals.

When asked by the committee members how big the Romani community is, she explained that

one of the main issues with Roma is documentation, and the numbers and data. Part of the reason is that there is no way to identify one's Roma identity other than self-identification. According to the latest census in Canada, there are between 4,000 and 6,000 Roma, but in fact, according to a Romani civil society organization, there are between 80,000 and 100,000 Roma who live in Canada, if not more.

She also elaborated that

the reason that Roma are less likely to self-identify is that obviously most Roma who come to Canada are here to escape situations of discrimination and most often come here with European passports,

like herself, who had a European passport. There's no way to identify somebody who's Roma unless they self-identify. She added that in Europe the latest estimates are between 10 million and 15 million while there are about at least 2 million in the Americas.

3:30

Not all are aware of the atrocities committed against the Jews and other minorities they deemed racially inferior during the Holocaust. Millions of people lost their lives under the fascist Nazi regime. Many might not be aware of what occurred during the Romani genocide, which took place in the 1940s. "Romani" is a term often used for several ethnic communities in Germany and eastern Europe. The Roma and Sinti people, among others, belong to these communities. Similar to what happened to the Jews, the Romani endured deportations and discrimination in the years prior to the Holocaust.

Like the Jews, the Romani were deemed the other in an attempt to dehumanize them and to legitimize violence against their community. Dehumanizing people is always the first step towards justifying acts of wrongdoing towards them, Madam Chair. In this case these wrongdoings were particularly disturbing. The Nazis forcefully confined the Romani people and subjected them to cruel conditions. They murdered or confined over half a million Romani people in the infamous concentration camps. We are all too familiar with what happened at places like concentration camps or one of the many death camps spread throughout the Nazi-occupied territory. Some of the Romani were confined to what was then called the gypsy concentration camp because of their ethnicity and

incorrect things that many Germans believed about them. The Romani were subject to horrific treatment.

It is true that these events are shocking, Madam Chair, but I don't talk about these events because I want to shock people. I talk about what happened during those dark years because if we weren't to talk about the past, we will forget it, and our children will never know about it. If we take the time to remember what happened every year, we show respect to the survivors of these crimes and their descendants. These are not closed issues. An annual period of remembrance and education is all important because there will always be a need to fight such untoward behaviours.

Madam Chair, for years the Romani communities have called for recognition for these events. Last year our nation remembered and mourned the violence of the Nazi regime against the Romani people, making August 2 Romani Genocide Remembrance Day. In doing so, the House of Commons officially recognized the Romani genocide, issuing a statement honouring the over 500,000 victims of these mass murders. Discrimination against these communities, however, continues to this day. That is why further education is so important, especially given the concerning lack of awareness about the past and present genocide by the younger generations.

This bill will promote understanding and awareness about the effects of these atrocities on the communities of Alberta that still feel the effects today. Part of this entails requiring the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to table a report within one year that outlines strategies to combat the causes of genocide. Madam Chair, this bill is proactive as well as commemorative. It demands action as well as remembrance. This report is designed to recognize the impact of the atrocities of genocide on individuals who belong to many different religious and ethnic communities of Alberta. This report will also propose strategies to remember the victims of genocide and promote better understanding of the causes of genocide around the world. It is only by understanding the causes of genocide that we can actively identify the situations in our world today and take action to stop them.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this subamendment to Bill 205, as introduced by the Member for Peace River. You know, I'm very happy that this bill is before the House. I think it's an extremely important topic, as we've heard all the speakers who have spoken to it up to this moment identify, and I certainly would agree with the concerns that they have expressed. Unfortunately, I'm not feeling likely to be able to support this particular subamendment because I don't feel like it's gone far enough and has done the right kinds of things. I'd like to speak to this subamendment and its inadequacies. In fact, later I will introduce another subamendment to repair these inadequacies, but for the moment we'll stick to this particular subamendment.

Now, the concern here is that the government has chosen a method of proceeding which is intended to circumscribe the definition of genocide very tightly to one that depends on motions and bills passed in the House of Commons as opposed to making a decision to make a declaration of the concerns and beliefs of this House and their concerns about genocide. As a result, a number of the genocides that were originally intended to be discussed and

debated in this House under the original motion put forward have been eliminated using this particular subamendment. Furthermore, both the original intent and this subamendment have explicitly failed to address the genocide of indigenous peoples in Canada, including in the province of Alberta. As a result, we do not believe that we can proceed with this subamendment given its inadequacies.

Let me address a little bit more about that. There have been questions, of course, whether people believe that what has happened to the indigenous people in the province of Alberta and the country of Canada is a genocide or not, but I'd like to remind members of the House that the definition of what has happened to indigenous people in Canada as a genocide has been quite largely accepted in many communities, including, of course, the indigenous community in Canada, as demonstrated by both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which explicitly referred to it as a cultural genocide, and the recent inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people, who again explicitly used the word "genocide" to define the experiences of indigenous people in this country. So we know that the people who have experienced the genocide are defining it as a genocide.

It would seem a little bit remiss of us, as people who are probably more likely connected to the perpetrators of this genocide, to tell the victims of the genocide that they do not get to define their own experience, yet that is what this subamendment is doing. It is particularly excluding indigenous people, thereby telling those people who have been victimized that we are not prepared to listen to their own description of their own experience and to adopt the language that they have clearly adopted in their documentation and in their public discourse.

Now, sometimes people, you know, say that it was different here somehow because it was different than some other particular genocide that happened around the world, but I can tell you that it is over a hundred years since Canadian officials have publicly begun to chastise the government for the actions they have taken against indigenous people. I want to refer us back to the very first chief medical officer for the department of the interior, who became the chief medical officer in 1904, Dr. Bryce, who was given the responsibility to look at what was happening in Indian residential schools, as they were referred to at the time. He came back with a report in 1907 which explicitly detailed the fact that significantly high numbers of indigenous children were dying in residential schools. Now, he was concerned primarily about tuberculosis at the time, identifying that on average about 25 per cent of the children in residential schools were dying, which was far greater than anywhere outside of residential schools. He also identified that in some of the residential schools that number was well over 65 per cent.

3:40

Further documentation that has come out subsequently has indicated – we have recognition, for example, in November 2007 by the Canadian Press, that the death rates were exceeding 50 per cent, so this was well known. You can also go to the House of Commons' *Hansard* of the era, and you can see that the names of children who had died in residential school were being read into the record. This is not something that we are doing today to somehow rewrite history; this is, in fact, part of our history. The reports that have been submitted to the government of Canada for over a hundred years have identified the slaughter of indigenous people in this country.

If anyone has any further concerns about whether or not this fits the definition of genocide, let me just speak to what the definition of genocide is from the United Nations convention on the

prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, article II, which identifies that

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

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

Now, the question is: have all those things happened to indigenous people in this province? I wanted to identify that right away Dr. Bryce was concerned that indeed many of those things were happening, and in his report he asked then the commissioner who was responsible for residential schools of the time, Duncan Campbell Scott, to intervene in this case. Duncan Campbell Scott's response, recorded at the time, was:

It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habituating so closely in [these]... schools, and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is [being] geared towards [the] final solution of our Indian Problem.

Remember, he's using the expression of a final solution to the Indian problem and identifying that the death of indigenous children is not problematic. I think this clearly fits the definition of killing members of the group in the UN convention.

If you have any further concerns, there is a full report of all of those five conditions written by an Albertan by the name of Reverend Kevin Annett from the St. Paul area, who goes through each of the five areas and identifies specific examples and practices of the governments of Canada and Alberta that fit each of those five articles. His report, published in 2005, is called *Hidden from History: The Canadian Holocaust*.

In that report he identifies that indeed – and I think all of us here in this House could probably find examples to support this – all five of those conditions have in fact happened. We do know that members of the indigenous community have been murdered by government officials, we know that has happened repeatedly, and we know that the population of indigenous people after the arrival of the settlers into this country was reduced by approximately 80 per cent. We know that serious bodily harm or mental harm to members of the group has occurred, as has been testified repeatedly by people who testified in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry. That is on the record, and the reference material is readily available to anybody in this House.

We know that there has been an attempt to deliberately inflict on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction such as forcing people onto reserves and preventing them from engaging in their historical practices of harvesting on the land, which resulted in significant issues, in fact, significant issues of starvation of indigenous people in the province of Alberta after they slaughtered the buffalo for sport and simply to prevent indigenous people from having food, causing...

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Today I stand to support the amendment to Bill 205 as proposed by the Member for Peace River. I'm honoured to rise and speak to Bill 205, the

Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. I would like to applaud and thank the Member for Calgary-East and the team for supporting and bringing awareness to Albertans who have faced the long trauma of the horrific act of genocide.

Madam Chair, it is with great honour and privilege to be living in a province that is filled with diversity and culture. Alberta is home to many families that have different values and beliefs and have security, peace, and foresight to live on this land. We cannot hide the fact that many of the members and families from our communities have ancestry, descendants, or are victims that have faced crimes against humanity we know as genocide.

I would like to highlight the importance of remembering history that has affected millions of individuals around the world. Bill 205 is to provide commemoration to the victims who have suffered the atrocities and gave up their lives. This spread of awareness will be for our future generation so that history does not repeat itself. Bill 205 will promote dignity and respect for human rights, fulfilling advocacy that this bill seeks to endorse to commemorate the suffering of all victims of genocides as well as providing them an avenue to share their experience and for us to have a deeper understanding of what they have been through.

Madam Chair, I'd like to start off by voicing my support for the subamendment and recognizing that the Romani genocide is another horrific example of a tragic event that took place in the 21st century. This has been recognized by the House of Commons in August 2020. The Romani and Roma communities still to this day face racism and discrimination in many jurisdictions.

Madam Chair, during the Second World War an estimated half a million Roma in Europe were killed by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Recently the House of Commons recognized that the Roma people experienced genocide known as the Porajmos and the Samudaripen during the Second World War. Ms Dafina Savic, the founder and executive director of Romanipe, stated during her recent testimony at the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights that

the remaining 2,998 Romani prisoners of the gypsy family camp in Auschwitz . . . were murdered en masse by the Nazis and their collaborators. According to the latest estimates, at least half a million Roma were killed by Nazis and their collaborators during the Second World War. Unfortunately, this history remains largely ignored, unknown and untaught globally.

This past August the House of Commons recognized the genocide targeting the Romani people. The importance of educating young Albertans of the irreversible harms caused by genocide cannot be overstated, yet Alberta will continue to be a land of opportunity for immigrant families fleeing persecution and hardship. Immigrants from all corners of the globe have come to call Alberta home, and this UCP government will continue to foster meaningful relationships with all Albertans, new and old. Generations of immigrants seeking safety, new lands, or a fresh start have resided in this province for over a century and will continue to move here in the future.

This shouldn't be about politics or party. It's about humanity and standing up to evil. Alberta already leads most jurisdictions by example, with some of the most robust civil and humanitarian rights in the world. Now it's time to take the next step and entrench that leadership into our province. Unfortunately, there are still some authoritarian and socialist countries that are committing and will continue to commit great violations in the name of ideology or religion. Alberta will always be open to those survivors and their stories.

Our UCP government received an overwhelming mandate from Albertans from all walks of life two years ago. Many in this

Chamber and beyond have been touched by genocide in some way. Maybe your family heritage was a victim of the Holodomor. Maybe your religion was deemed inferior by an authoritarian or socialist government. Maybe your ethnicity was targeted by ethnic cleansers. If your family has not been touched in some way, a friend or acquaintance likely was. Together, by sharing stories, experiences, and history, we can learn as a society about how valuable we all are. When we shy away from speaking plainly of the atrocities wrought on the world's most vulnerable groups, the perpetrators win and the survivors are silenced.

3:50

Bill 205 ensures that Albertans never forget these atrocities. Bill 205 continues our promise of continuing to deliver quality legislation to the people of Alberta by acknowledging genocides recognized by the House of Commons of Canada. I'm happy to stand in support of Bill 205 as a foundation to recognizing the act of genocide, remembering the victims and survivors of genocide, promoting better understanding of genocides, and raising awareness of genocides. It is the spirit of Alberta to become welcoming and generous to those visiting and staying in this province. This is the same level of care and compassion. It can mean everything, especially to those fleeing persecution from authoritarian and socialist countries.

I'm excited to be taking this fundamental step with my colleagues, and I'm looking forward to unanimous approval of Bill 205 in the coming days. I would like to thank the MLA for Calgary-East for bringing forward this legislation, that will recognize the people who are often forgotten.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are any other members wishing to speak to amendment SA1? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand once again to further express my support for the subamendment being proposed by the Member for Peace River. Let me begin by highlighting that the government has committed to spread awareness and prevent future acts of genocide from occurring. The importance of memorializing history is to provide a better understanding of how we did progress into what we are now and also an opportunity to reflect on what should have been done better on unpleasant happenings. It is a chance for us to make improved decisions moving forward.

Our unique Canadian diverse background is our greatest asset. We are comprised of people from all walks of life, a multicultural nation, each with their unique strengths and experiences. We need to recognize that many Canadians still feel the effects of painful historical events. Bill 205 seeks to address this pain and to initiate a step towards healing through acceptance and recognition. To recognize that these events occurred is to accept that history is comprised of mixed events.

In April 2015 the House of Commons declared the month of April as the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month through Motion M-587. This was done to embrace the diversity in our country and recognize that Canada does not fail to include everyone that was affected by these unfortunate events.

Alberta continues to champion human rights while we condemn genocide. It is important to note, Madam Chair, that families, relatives, and descendants of the ones that have been deeply affected by these unimaginable events are living here in Alberta today. I would like to remind everyone of the reality of genocide and the consequences individuals and families have to endure that still, till this day, affect everyone. Bill 205 seeks to recognize and

commemorate the impact of genocide in their lives. It would also promote a better understanding of the causes of genocide as we pay tribute to and honour individuals who have made efforts and provided help to save lives during the happenings of many of these incidents outlined in Bill 205. At the same time, it will help the ones affected to heal and to move on from the suffering of the past, for some of these genocides have happened not so long ago.

Madam Chair, the Rwandan and Srebrenica genocides happened during the last decade of the 20th century. The Rwandan genocide was a mass slaughter of groups of Tutsi by the Hutus. This was carried out between April 7 and July 15 of 1994, during the Rwandan civil conflict. This particular genocide alone killed over 8,000 Tutsi. Genocide was resorted to by the Hutu majority as for them it was the only way to end a historical cycle of discrimination and oppression. A militia group called Interahamwe was mobilized and composed of about 30,000-strong men equipped with heavy arms. This also prompted Hutus executing their Tutsi neighbours. In addition to brutal mass killings, systematic rape was also used as a weapon of war during the genocide.

From 1993 to 1995 Canada was a leading contributor to a series of United Nations peacekeeping missions in the African nation of Rwanda. In 2004 the Canadian Parliament declared April 7 as a Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. On April 7, 2008, the Canadian Parliament adopted a resolution to designate April 7 as a Day of Reflection on the Prevention of Genocide.

The Srebrenica massacre, also known as the Srebrenica genocide, happened in the following year after the Rwandan genocide, in July 1995. The Srebrenica genocide was a systematic murder of more than 8,000 Bosniaks, Muslim men and boys, mostly around the town of Srebrenica during the Bosnian unrest. Throughout the first year of the conflict Srebrenica saw heavy and aggressive violence, and the town at the centre of the municipality experienced Serb military and artillery assaults accompanied by the ethnic cleansing of Bosniak Muslim civilians in towns and villages that were in the hands of Serbian forces.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, established before the massacre to scrutinize ongoing military contact, found that the killing at Srebrenica, coupled with the mass expulsion of Bosniak civilians, women and children, amounted to genocide. The court pointed out that the Bosnian Serb army were primarily responsible for the killings. This proves how horrific these events are in mankind's history, and this also shows that men can be devastating when overcome with discrimination and hatred. The pain agonized by the victims' families or their descendants won't easily be taken away. That is why, Madam Chair, we must show compassion and care. We must together remember and commemorate.

The government has been working hard to protect Albertans from prejudice, discrimination, and racial, marginalized, or ethnic attacks, especially now more than ever. I support the subamendment being proposed, Madam Chair, as this will clarify the wording of the bill, and it will also give a better understanding of the purpose of the section being amended, which is to increase awareness of genocide being recognized by the House of Commons of Canada, which will not only capture the currently recognized genocides but also include further recognition.

I commend the member for introducing this subamendment. Bill 205 is an opportunity to learn about the heritage, culture, and achievements that many of these groups like the Rwandan and Srebrenica communities have to share and all the genocides that have been and will be recognized by the House of Commons. There have been other instances that appear to constitute genocide, but

since it is a contentious issue, we cannot just solely declare this was a genocide without undergoing a careful examination and declaration.

With this bill, Madam Chair, the Alberta government will work harder than ever towards spreading and preventing future challenges of genocide. Alberta continues to reach out and extend support and assistance to all the victims and their families here, providing shelter and a new beginning to all who have been victims of unfair treatment and abandoned human rights.

4:00

Let me restate that the government is committed to improving the lives of families and individuals that are affected by these inhumane tragedies. The government highly recognizes the importance of the promotion and defending of human rights. Last year, Madam Chair, we held here in the Legislature rotunda the Ukrainian famine, or Holodomor, memorial. The Speaker led the honouring of the victims of this horrendous and intentional starvation of millions of Ukrainians.

Bill 205 will allow us to engage with different religious and ethnic organizations to commemorate through an annual activity or celebration. Also, it is intended to spread awareness of the devastating impacts of genocide to prevent the happening of these atrocities in the world and to commemorate with the victims, survivors, or their descendants.

I again express my appreciation to all members that support this bill. I encourage everyone to also support the subamendment to simplify the ordering and properly express the intention of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I need to stand up and speak to this subamendment. You know, one of the things that we share sometimes in this House is the capacity to see that we have lives outside of this House. One of the things that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and I share is a common teaching background, where we often had to walk into our classrooms, and we had to try and take some of the events of history, some of those dry, dusty events, that sometimes my kids didn't understand why we were looking at them, and we had to try to make them relevant. We had to try to bring them into their lives and into their consciousness and to try to get them to understand why these were important events.

You know, sometimes in life you have an opportunity to meet someone. We were always looking at ways that we could try and get in our classrooms a video or an individual or a story that would bring to life the lesson that we were trying to teach. Sometimes you meet someone that does exactly that for you in your life, that changes how you see the world. By listening to their life, to their story, by seeing the events that they went through, you walk away a different and a better person. For me, on this issue of the subamendment and on this issue of a genocide, that occurred at least two or three times in my life.

Probably the first time was when I was a young teacher. We brought in a survivor of the Holocaust and had an opportunity to listen to her life. To see the events leading up to World War II and to the Nazis gaining power in Germany and how they changed with the Nuremberg laws and how they lived their lives, how Jewish people could live their lives in Nazi Germany and the restrictions that were placed upon them and the eventual and steady, step-by-step progress towards the Holocaust changed the lives of those students and mine.

Madam Chair, I can remember going to a church and listening to a Rwandan pastor talk about the night, the harrowing night, that he



and his family lived through as militias were circling their house and throwing grenades in and how their family, by the grace of God, escaped. It changes the way you look at the world.

It happened to me just a couple of years ago when my wife and I went to the Holocaust Museum in Los Angeles. We just happened to be able to listen to a 90-year-old-plus lady, a survivor of the Holocaust. She told us her story as a young girl and how she survived.

Those events change the way you look at the world. Those people's lives change the way you look at this world. I believe that when you take a look at this piece of legislation that we're looking at, this bill has the ability to make the world a better place. The purpose of this subamendment is to ensure that this bill remains relevant. That's what we were trying to do when I was in my classroom. We were trying to make sure that the kids in my classroom could see the relevancy of studying the Holocaust and studying history.

Now, genocide is a terrible thing. Regardless of the target, it should be denounced and should be denounced completely, and I feel that by making Bill 205 more broad with this amendment that we will be able to be more inclusive in condemning all of the instances that genocide has been recognized.

The intention of this bill was never to create division. The amendment makes this clear by focusing on the act itself and all of the instances where genocide has been committed, and that's important. We as a province and as a nation are so diverse, with many different cultures and many different races, with no one being more important than the other, and we value each of our cultures and we value their respective histories. This is why I'm supporting this amendment, so that the broader message of genocide and all of the horrific instances in history can be remembered and be understood and can be condemned for what they were.

Bill 205 declares April of each year as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month. It is based on the definition of genocide found in article 2 of the United Nations convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. This idea of genocide, World War II, the conclusion of that war, and then the bringing to justice of the Nazi war criminals and this whole idea of holding people accountable for this idea of genocide, is critical in the history of mankind.

Genocide has a definition. Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. It could be killing members of the group. It could be causing serious bodily or mental harm to the members of that group. It could be deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life that are calculated to bring about its physical destruction either in whole or in part. It's imposing measures intended to prevent births within that group. It's forcibly transferring children of the group into another group.

The goal of this bill is to combat the causes of the genocide by taking April of every year to recognize the impact of the atrocities of genocide on individuals and on the communities that they belong to, be they religious or ethnic, et cetera. It's to remember the victims of genocide. It's to promote better understanding of the causes of genocide.

I can remember in my classrooms sitting down with the kids and saying, you know: how can this happen? Just take World War II, just take the genocide of the Holocaust that occurred: how could some of the most educated, wealthy, sophisticated individuals in the world find themselves in a situation where millions and millions of their citizens and citizens from other nations be murdered? How does that happen?

This is important. We need to remember those victims of genocide, and we need to promote a better understanding of the

causes. We need to increase the awareness of genocides that have occurred across the world and that are occurring today. Of course, we've heard it talked about in this Legislature this afternoon already, about perhaps the most recent example, where in our House of Commons a subcommittee has been studying the ongoing persecution of the Uighur Muslims in China. They've heard from the experts, they've brought them in, and they've come to the conclusion that this is a genocide. The House of Commons just voted to recognize it as such based on that definition that we just talked about in the United Nations.

4:10

All of this shows that debates on genocide and the recognition of genocide are an ongoing thing. It's a part of our curriculum in Alberta. It's a part of the conversation that we have as Albertans and as Canadians as we look at the world around us and we realize that not all governments are made equal. Not all governments treat their people with the respect of their rights as we have here in Alberta and in Canada. We need to recognize that. We need to consider that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any more speakers to subamendment 1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to rise and add some comments to Bill 205 and, of course, more specifically, amendment SA1. I must admit that I'm a little confused by the amendment, just based on what is contained on page 2 of Bill 205. Nonetheless, it is important work. As the Government House Leader mentioned earlier, private members don't get very much time in the Assembly, unfortunately, to discuss and debate their matters. Especially, it would seem, members of the Official Opposition don't get that opportunity to debate their bills in the House.

When I was looking at the subamendment, I must admit that seeing over half of the list kind of being crossed off here a little bit, I'm almost wondering if it maybe borderline changes a little bit of the intent of the author of the bill, but he apparently has now spoken in favour of the amendment.

I think we've very much missed an opportunity here, choosing to leave out a chance to address a very important genocide that has occurred right here in our country. Listening to, you know, the previous speaker and my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford talking about, quite frankly, how important it is and what is a genocide, what constitutes that, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford was very, very clear about how that can be defined, which is exactly what we have with indigenous peoples here in Canada and, of course, specifically here in Alberta, and why we're not taking the opportunity to lead by example and call it what it is. It is a genocide of indigenous peoples, their culture, their heritage.

Certainly, there have been some small steps taken towards changing that. You know, Madam Chair, like you, I served in the 29th Legislature, and I remember then members of the opposition quite robust in their calls for the apology for the '60s scoop, and rightfully so, something that had to be crafted with the participation of indigenous peoples so that it was actually a meaningful apology.

But now here we have the roles reversed. That's the reality. Members who served in opposition in the 29th now serve as members of the government caucus, and I don't see the same fire being brought forward to recognize, through Bill 205 and, more specifically, through subamendment SA1, the genocide that has occurred with indigenous peoples here in the province of Alberta and, more broadly, in Canada. We have an opportunity to lead this conversation rather than just simply saying: well, let's do what

Ottawa is doing. It's funny because one minute I see nothing but fighting with Ottawa, and now, the next minute: well, let's do what they're doing.

I see conflict in what's being said, what's being written down, what we've committed to in the past, and what we're now trying to do through this. If the intention is to recognize genocide in all its forms and all the people that it's afflicted, that must include right here at home in our very own backyard here in Alberta and recognize the genocide of indigenous peoples. I find the subamendment to be lacking. If anything, I think we could have maybe looked at that subsection a little bit differently in terms of an amendment rather than being so broad.

I'm hoping that the members who, again, served in the 29th Legislature, who rose with passion, rose with conviction demanding that the government at the time get on with the '60s scoop apology – I'd like to see them rise in this House with the same fire, with the same passion to recognize the genocide of indigenous peoples. I think the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford very clearly explained what that is, very clearly demonstrated how that has occurred here in Canada, specifically here in Alberta. To kind of just dismiss that and follow Ottawa's lead does a disservice, a very large disservice.

I've listened to the comments around teaching history in our classrooms. I must admit that that was rather – I would agree. We have to teach our young emerging leaders what our history contains so that we don't repeat it. But I have to say that when we've seen individuals, part of the Premier's staff, and the views that they hold, it gives me serious pause about the kind of message that's potentially being communicated. Is that the reason why we just won't make that leap to call it what it is, indigenous genocide? I'm hoping that maybe members might have a second thought about this.

Again, I do believe we have an opportunity here to make a piece of legislation that the hon. member has brought forward – I was part of the committee that got to initially review it. I was hoping, of course, at that time that we would have seen, I guess, a little more robust substance around consultations.

4:20

You know, I understand that private members don't have the resources that the government has to undertake provincial consultations, but you can't tell me that there wasn't an ability to pick up a phone to call someone in the indigenous communities somewhere to get their thoughts on the bill, to be able to get their insight about how important this could be to them. It was very clearly communicated in the truth and reconciliation. It was very clearly communicated within the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit.

Please – I'm asking you – don't lose this opportunity by creating just a broad definition that, hopefully, maybe someday Ottawa will add to. We have the opportunity to lead right here, right now. We can show the indigenous peoples of Alberta and Canada who we really are.

**The Chair:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to subamendment SA1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Issik:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise today to speak on Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act, that's been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-East, and to speak to this subamendment. You know, I've listened with interest this afternoon as members from all sides of the Chamber have shared perspectives and history relating to genocide. It reminds me that the last time I rose in this Chamber to

speak to this bill, I shared some personal reflections on genocide from personal friends who had survived the Holocaust, the impact that genocide had had on my family, notably my husband, who is of Syrian descent, and his family, who have been scattered across the world as a result. There is no doubt that genocide is absolutely traumatizing to those who experience it directly, but it also creates that intergenerational trauma that affects families for generations and separates them and scatters them across the world.

Here in Alberta we've had many who have come to Alberta as a result of escaping genocide. You know, in our province we are home to a large Ukrainian population – in my riding in particular I have a very large Ukrainian population – and of course many of them came to our province seeking refuge from the Holodomor. I think it's important to sort of, when we speak of genocide, speak of the details as part of remembrance. I would also like to say that this bill is on remembrance, condemnation, and prevention, and the purpose of it is to set aside a month here in Alberta where we talk about these issues, where we talk about these events, and where we seek to find ways to understand and to ultimately prevent these atrocities from happening ever again to anyone else.

Now, the Holodomor is one of those genocides. It was a genocide of mass starvation of millions of Ukrainians between 1932 and 1933 as a result of the policies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the U.S.S.R. Millions of women, men, and children were slowly starved to death through the implementation of a policy to take away the food from the farmers in Ukraine, and it sickens me to think about and hear the stories of the Ukrainian families who had their food taken away and who, in fact, starved to death.

Holodomor was an attack on the cultural, religious, and political leadership of the Ukraine. Most of the Ukraine was under Soviet control, where they could implement horrific policies on Ukrainians. At the end of the '20s the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, decided to curtail Ukraine's cultural autonomy. He launched the intimidation, arrest, imprisonment, and execution of thousands of Ukrainian intellectuals, church leaders, and people who supported Ukraine's distinctiveness. During this time Stalin also ordered the collectivization of agriculture in Ukraine.

Now, the majority of Ukrainians, who were small-scale or subsistence farmers, resisted these policies because it would ruin their livelihoods. Because of this resistance to the state that was controlled by the Soviets, they confiscated the property of the independent farmers and forced them to work on government-controlled collective farms. The prosperous farmers such as those who owned a few head of livestock and those who resisted collectivization were branded as kulaks, meaning rich peasants. They were declared enemies of the state who, in the opinion of the state, deserved to be eliminated as a class. This resulted in thousands of people being thrown out of their homes and deported. Now, scapegoating wasn't a new tactic. We saw in the Holocaust how scapegoating was employed against the Jewish people. In the Holodomor they did it with the kulaks. Because they were given an identity of being the enemy of the state, people were less likely to help them when they were mistreated.

The Holodomor officially started in 1932, when the Communist Party set impossibly high quotas for the amount of grain that Ukrainian villages were required to contribute to the Soviet state. Unsurprisingly, the villages were unable to meet the quotas, which brought in the Soviet authorities. They confiscated all the food they had, even the seed set aside for planting, levying fines in meat, potatoes, et cetera, for the failure to fill the quotas.

When starving farmers attempted to leave their villages to search for food, Soviet authorities issued a decree forbidding Ukrainian peasants from leaving the country. Those who managed to get out of their villages were sent back, which was a death sentence in itself

because, of course, they had no food. Another law was introduced that made any theft of grain an act of sabotage, which was punishable by execution. This was monitored by soldiers who were posted in watchtowers. Because of these cruel and terrible policies, many were starved to death while Soviet enforcers continued to extract even more from these villages.

Madam Chair, it's incredibly important to note that even though this was happening, it was not well known around the world at the time. This is because the Soviet Union hid and denied the Holodomor genocide. All discussions of what was happening in Ukraine were actively repressed, and statistics such as population numbers were altered to hide it. Any outside press at the time needed the state's permission to live in the U.S.S.R. or to work there. For journalists, this was even more difficult as they needed to be on good terms with the state because they were responsible for the foreign press corps. They even had journalists submit a proposed itinerary before any journey into the provinces in the U.S.S.R., and all requests to go to the Ukraine, of course, were denied. Because people talked about their experiences and were able to escape from this horrific situation, we are able to learn from the victims and mourn with them about the genocide.

Bill 205 allows us to reaffirm that the horrific acts by the Soviet Union in the Ukraine were indeed a genocide. It ensures that we know that these acts were wrong and that they will not be committed again. Bill 205 ensures that we remember the victims of genocide and promote a better understanding of the causes of genocide. It acknowledges genocides such as the Holodomor as well as others as they're recognized by the House of Commons.

I was particularly happy to see the motion come forward in the House of Commons the other day with respect to the Uighurs in China. This is especially important today as there are current genocides – I just mentioned one – going on around the world, and it's incredibly sad that it still continues to happen day after day after day. Recently the House of Commons accused the Chinese government, as I said, of carrying out a campaign against the Uighurs and the other Turkic Muslims.

By talking about and acknowledging what constitutes a genocide and how people were marginalized and scapegoated during a genocide, we are more likely to avoid these mistakes. This is the purpose of this bill, to not only remember but also to condemn and to prevent. This is the importance of this bill. We have history, and we have definitions, and we're all able to call out the genocides presently.

I'd like to give thanks to the Member for Calgary-East for bringing this bill forward. It was courageous. I would strongly urge support of not only the bill but the subamendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:30

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to add my voice to the debate here on Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. We in the opposition certainly think there are some pretty important positive steps in this bill and that it is absolutely essential. I think we both agree on it, on both sides of this House, that we do remember and we do condemn and we do prevent genocide in the world. I mean, these are heinous acts, and we must stand up against them. So putting forward an act like this to carve out a month, you know, to identify these concerns and to remember the people who died in these horrific events and condemn those who killed them and prevent further genocides, of course, is something that we all can agree on. I will certainly begin my remarks there.

As other members on this side of the House have shared, we feel it doesn't go far enough because it's missing a key element. This is the inclusion of indigenous women and girls and the genocide that we know has gone on in this country, right here in our own country. Certainly, I know that in this particular, I guess, subamendment the member is suggesting that it's important for us to follow the policy of the federal government. That's kind of novel a little bit because oftentimes the UCP government does choose not to, you know, work collaboratively, co-operatively with the federal government, but in this case they are. Unfortunately, the federal government hasn't seen fit to include indigenous women and girls, so because we are agreeing with that, we are making the same mistake here in Alberta. I guess I stand up against that here in this House.

You know, I think this is the time for the UCP to actually stand up against the federal government in this situation. I actually would support that very much. Certainly, we know that in other circumstances – you know, we're in the middle of a pandemic here in our province, and the federal government has a role to play, as do provincial governments. For example, the critical worker benefit that the feds put forward some time ago was only just sort of decided on in the last week or so by this UCP government. There's an example of when they didn't respond in a timely manner. Frankly, it hurt Albertans that they did not move more quickly on giving Albertans money in their pockets at a time that was very difficult. Many people had lost their jobs.

So that would have been a time also, I think, to agree with the federal government, and I think that in contrast this is a time perhaps not to. I guess I just question the logic of the times that the UCP government is accepting what the federal government is doing and when they're not. I would submit that currently they should actually be standing up against the federal government, using this as an opportunity to really be leaders, to be people who are going to take this opportunity – it's a significant opportunity – to include indigenous women and girls in this bill.

We know that there continues to be significant suffering in the community, a significant attack just because you are an indigenous woman or girl in this country. The previous member spoke about the definition and went into each of the details, and it certainly fulfills the definition of the United Nations on: what is genocide? I guess that I would submit that this is actually a good time for the UCP government to stand up against something that the federal government has done and say: "Hey, you missed something here. You missed including indigenous women and girls."

I can't help but bring to everyone's attention another area where the UCP have not actually followed the federal government's support, similar to the critical worker benefit. It's in the affordable housing rent supplement. That money has been available for months. There has been no agreement. People are becoming homeless, losing their apartments, and that's another area where they should be agreeing. I don't know what the logic behind any of this is, but certainly this is a case where, I think, it's important that the UCP government be leaders, stand up, and include indigenous women and girls as one of the genocides that we stand up on and that we certainly want to remember, condemn, and prevent.

We know that right here in our own city we've had national news coverage continuously on the murder of Cindy Gladue here in our province, which is a very disturbing case and a case where, really, justice wasn't done originally. It did go to appeal, and I feel like now justice is done although Cindy Gladue is dead, and she was killed by someone in a horrific circumstance. It's not like we're talking about things that happened years and years ago. I mean, this kind of stuff still happens, and we still need to stand against it. Of course, the truth and reconciliation hearing said that this is one of the reparations. This is one of the ways that we can as Canadians

collectively stand up now and say, you know, that this is not okay. This is what it is: it was a genocide. We need to acknowledge it. It's such a great opportunity. This bill, brought forward by a UCP member, is an ideal opportunity for the UCP, really, to stand up and show their leadership and really be representatives that care and support indigenous people. So it's tragic that that is not happening, and we're missing an opportunity.

Again, I'm just saying that the bill doesn't go far enough, but it's a good start. If the UCP would accept some of the influence of the Official Opposition in this case, I mean, I think that they would certainly have much better relations with the indigenous community in Alberta. I would think that that is important to them because this is something that they specifically asked for.

I guess that sometimes, you know, we sort of know what people say, and then you hear about things sort of in the backrooms and things like that, and that's kind of where I want to go next just in my comments. Even though I think the UCP certainly talks about how they want to support indigenous people and certainly be respectful to them, they've had staff members speak very attackingly of indigenous people. Speech writers for the Premier have talked about how including First Nations perspectives in curriculum is a fad and that it was sort of mythical, the account of colonization and what happened to the indigenous people. This is a person who was in a key leadership position within the UCP government, so that definitely, well, for me, just smacks of hypocrisy, that it's not actually important to the UCP, their relationship with indigenous people, that they see them as, obviously, experiencing colonization in our country, so much so that women's and girls' lives have been taken in horrific ways for years and years.

You know, I grew up in northern Alberta in a town called Valleyview, and it was kind of – I remember, you know, the Highway of Tears, that we call it, that was highway 16, and we would hear about . . .

4:40

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA1? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I stand again to provide support to the subamendment as proposed by the Member for Peace River, which seeks to clarify the wording in Bill 205, particularly in section 2, subsection (b). I thank the member for doing this initiative.

Even today there are people who deny that the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide occurred and seek to diminish the impact these events had through the 20th and 21st centuries. What is more upsetting is the widespread increasing lack of knowledge about such events. Many people today have not learned in great depth about the impact that such genocides have had on their victims.

Let me touch a little bit on the Holocaust, Madam Chair. The word "Holocaust" is derived from the Greek word "holokauston," which means a sacrifice totally burned by fire. This would show the eventual execution of the Nazi extermination of about 6 million Jews and others in crematoria and open fires.

The Nazis were involved in two wars at the same time, the world war and the racial war against Jews. This hatred against the Jews had been manifestly existing even before the Nazis came to power in Germany. Hitler developed the thinking that the Jews are racial contaminants, a cancer in German society, and classified them as subhumans wanting to stage world domination. When seated into power in early 1933, this idea started to translate into actions by the boycotting of Jewish businesses, dismissal of Jews in the

government services, restrictions of Jewish students in schools, and burning of books and other writings of known aliens.

When the Nuremberg laws were enacted in 1935, they excluded the Jews from German citizenship, limiting them to just mere subjects of state. It also prohibited marriages between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood. What followed three years after this was the so-called Night of the Broken Glass, a violent anti-Jew propaganda which was orchestrated during burning and damaging of about a thousand synagogues and damaging of more than 7,000 businesses by rioters.

These initial actions would then culminate in the so-called final solution to the Jewish question, Madam Chair, where millions of Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps, where the elderly, children, infirm, or weak were immediately executed while others would later on be facing extermination in the large gas chambers. A further part of it was killing done by the Einsatzgruppen, the search for Jews town by town, including in the neighbouring countries. They marched them to huge pits, stripped them, lined them up, and shot them with automatic weapons.

The Romani genocide was perpetrated by the Nazis as well, Madam Chair. It involved a matter of over 500,000 Romani people, as I elaborated in my previous comment.

Madam Chair, the same fate was suffered by about 600,000 to 2 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. The empire believed Armenians as a threat to its security, so in 1915 its authorities ordered the arrest of about 215 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders, most of them men, who were later killed. Followed by the passing of the legislation allowing deportation of Armenians, they were removed from their homes and marched towards desert concentration camps. During this time the systematic mass murder happened. Men, women, young or old: they were massacred.

The genocides that have happened over the last century may have different motivational backgrounds but with similar, disturbing results. We have members of communities here in Alberta who are either victims or descendants of the victims of genocide. At the very least, what they seek to be done is to accept and recognize the atrocities that were carried out without respect to human dignity. As Canadians we want to set a leading standard of excellence, both in education and in meeting Canadians' diverse needs.

Section 2 of Bill 205, Madam Chair, lays out the purpose of the bill in fulfillment of its aim to remember, condemn, and prevent genocide in Alberta. Under subsection (a) thereof it reflects the position of the provincial government to be in the lead in the prevention of genocide in Alberta. We cannot just state that genocide prevention is a federal matter, being the signatory and representative to the UN convention. Discrimination, hatred, racism, or bigotry and other forms that would cause genocide should not be tolerated and must be condemned by all levels of governance. The exercise of having a representative in the UN convention and entering a treaty would be a federal matter, but the commitment and performance of engaging with different ethnic and religious communities can be best done in the provincial and municipal elements, who would know the best and particular needs and situation of each community.

Having said that, Madam Chair, this bill encourages the government to develop strategies to combat the causes of genocide. I understand that this is not an easy task or a simple commitment. Nonetheless, we have to go an extra mile. We have to start the significant step towards the prevention of genocide. We have to make sure that this path that we aim to pursue is not only being seen and heard by Albertans but also being felt by everyone. Some may say that there is no single strategy that would be determined in combatting the causes of genocide. Nonetheless, I do believe that

by doing this initiative, the government would take a significant step in creating a solution that will deliver a fruitful result and that it will encourage all communities to unite in the prevention of genocide, which entails a continuing process and action.

Going further into the bill, Madam Chair, section 2(b) thereof sets out different moves that must be done during the month of April of each year to further achieve the ultimate intention of the bill. It stipulates that during the month of April of each year we recognize the impacts of genocide, remember the victims, promote a better understanding of the causes, and increase awareness of genocides that have occurred. I would once again like to remind the House that the wording of the bill, to remember, condemn, and prevent genocide, is not limiting.

The subamendment as proposed will clarify the wording of the bill, and in part that would mean that future recognitions of any genocide by the House of Commons are deemed included in this bill towards the increasing of awareness of genocide. This was made to clarify the wording, to explicitly provide the clear intention of the bill. In other words, in the initiative to increase awareness about genocide, the genocides recognized by the House of Commons will be used, including further recognitions.

Bill 205 will be a critical step in raising awareness about previous genocides and working to prevent future atrocities. I strongly encourage members on both sides of the House to support this bill and the subamendment as proposed.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:50

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to subamendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Mr. Toor:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm proud to rise to speak to Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. First, I want to applaud my friend and colleague from Calgary-East for bringing this bill forward.

It is crucial as a civilization to recognize the atrocities that have affected the lives of many people across the globe. With this in mind, I welcome the subamendment brought forward by the Member for Peace River. After seeing the bill, I had some concerns because there was a list of genocides in this bill. To broaden the spectrum of the genocides that have happened all over the world and to include them in this amendment is a very positive step. Our government is making it clear that in this province we recognize all genocides that have been recognized by the House of Commons. It became clear that removing the list would create the most inclusive and impactful legislation that would remain relevant for so many years to come.

There is no atrocity that is less significant in the eyes of those affected, and we should not venture to undermine the significance of any genocide. I think it's true that, for many of us, we get so caught up in the present that we forget to remember the past and reflect on its significance for today. With this bill in place, Albertans can use the month of April as an opportunity to review the past and educate themselves on the importance of confronting hatred. Even in seemingly insignificant forms, hatred of others based on immutable characteristics must not be tolerated regardless of the magnitude.

I would like to take the remaining time I have to reflect upon a few genocides in particular. The Romani genocide took place from 1933 to 1945. This genocide took place in many of the same places as the Nazi-led genocide of the Jews during the Holocaust. Yet while the Romani genocide occurred at a similar historic point and in many of the same places as the Holocaust, we must not conflate their legacies as they are quite different. They're different in terms

of the lasting impacts each atrocity had on the communities that were affected.

Romani people referred to themselves by a number of different names, but to outsiders who may not be familiar with their culture, they're often called gypsies, a word that tends to have many negative connotations. These negative connotations can often quickly snowball into feelings of mistrust and even hatred for a particular group. In this case, the hatred or the mistrust of Romanis is called anti-Romism. This, unfortunately, was the driving attitude that led to the mass execution of Romanis at various killing centres.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 8.6 we will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

[A cellphone rang]

**The Speaker:** I almost feel like there was a cellphone violation there.

I believe the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has a request prior to moving the motion. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Centralization of Emergency Dispatch

516. Ms Phillips moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take into consideration the views of the residents of Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, who are well served by a local, integrated model of emergency dispatch, and immediately take steps to reverse the decision to implement the centralization of the dispatch of emergency medical services.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and ask for the House to grant unanimous consent to amend Motion 516 to address an issue that has been raised with me of sub judice, which could lead to it being out of order. Therefore, I would like to request the House to provide unanimous consent to replace Motion 516 with the following wording, and I do have the requisite number of copies for the hon. members as well.

The replacement language would read:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take into consideration the views of the residents of Calgary, Lethbridge, and Red Deer, who are well served by a local, integrated model of emergency dispatch, and immediately take steps to reverse the decision to implement the centralization of the dispatch of emergency medical services.

The new motion is the same as the old motion with the exception of the fact that the “and the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo” language has been removed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will provide the copies of the new wording.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. If you want to pass that to the page. Typically in a request for unanimous consent it would be just that, but I think that given the uniqueness of the situation, if you can bring one to the table and to the Deputy Government House Leader so that she can have a quick look at the wording. Then I will make the request as soon as both of those individuals have seen the official copy.

Hon. members, I will ask only one question. The question before the Assembly is for unanimous consent to replace Motion Other than Government Motion 516 with the wording as read by the hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Sub Judice

**The Speaker:** Prior to proceeding and calling on the hon. member, I would like to just make a brief statement with respect to the principle of sub judice and the debate that will now take place.

Before we proceed to the debate on the revised motion, I would like to provide some preliminary comments. As you are aware, under Standing Order 23(g) the Speaker will call members to order if they refer to a matter that is before the court in a legal proceeding if there is a probability that the debate on the matter would prejudice a party to the proceedings. However, if there is doubt as to whether the debate on the matter would prejudice such a party, the rule is to be applied in favour of the debate, as will be applied this afternoon.

5:00

The challenge in applying the rule is that the chair is seldom in possession, before the debate has occurred, of the information necessary to determine whether prejudice is likely to arise in any particular case. I would therefore like to share a passage from *House of Commons Journals* debate April 29, 1977, found at page 728, that provides guidance in this respect. “While there can be no substitute for the discretion of the Chair in the last resort, all Members of the House should share in the responsibility of exercising restraint when it seems called for. A Member who feels that there could be a risk of causing prejudice in referring to a particular case or inquiry should refrain from . . . [such a] matter.”

Hon. members, I would suggest that this afternoon there is quite likely the need for some restraint. I would strongly encourage all members to exercise such restraint as we proceed with debate on Motion 516. Since, as I understand, despite the court recently issuing an interim injunction order against the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo relating to that municipality’s dispatch service, the court has not yet heard the government’s application for a permanent injunction against the municipality in respect to the same matter. I also understand that the hearing on this application may occur in the coming days.

For that reason, I would ask members to be mindful during their speech to avoid comments that could result in prejudicing a party’s position on a legal proceeding currently before the courts; otherwise, the chair will be required to intervene.

I’ll now recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you for your guidance in this matter, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for erring on the side of making sure that we can have this conversation. I brought this motion forward because I wanted to reflect the perspective of my constituents, which is, in fact, I think, some of the most important work that we do here, particularly, you know, when I’m talking about the residents of Lethbridge, who live a long way away, right? It’s 500 kilometres from here, and we need to make sure that – this is a big province – we reflect the views of the people who sent us here to do a job regardless of what party card we hold or anything like that. We’re here to reflect our constituents.

In this matter I want to just briefly outline what is at stake, and then I want to talk about the views of the residents of my own constituency and elsewhere throughout the city of Lethbridge and southern Alberta. What’s at issue here is that the city of Lethbridge has what’s called integrated fire-EMS services. So what happens is that if there’s a very serious, high-acuity medical emergency, essentially, who is dispatched is whoever is available. This reduces our response times. What they call them is fire medics, so they’re firefighters who are trained as EMS responders, paramedics, as well.

We have dually trained fire and EMS, so in Lethbridge – and they are dispatched outside the city’s limits, all around to a number of different communities throughout southern Alberta – they are able to dispatch a fire truck to support medical emergencies, especially if it is going to take a medical first responder longer to get to that emergency. It’s kind of: whoever is available, get in the truck, go and do the work.

For example, Lethbridge responded to 3,750 medical first response calls in 2019, and a fire truck arrived before EMS to those medical emergencies 19 per cent of the time. And Lethbridge only dispatches fire trucks to the highest acuity calls so as to, obviously, not incorrectly divert fire resources. It has been a helpful system that has worked well for many years.

In fact, Deputy Chief Kelly L’Hirondelle said at a news conference that I hosted in September that the model has worked well for 108 years. He believes this change will not – now, there are proposed changes, and the deputy chief has indicated, as have a number of the firefighters and others throughout our community, including residents, that a certain change being proposed by the provincial government will not in fact be positive for the people of Lethbridge.

What has happened over the last few years is that periodically, you know, some enthusiastic people in AHS will approach the government of the day – this happened in the PC years, it happened to us, and it has now happened again – with a great bureaucratic scheme to centralize EMS dispatch, claiming that there will be so many funds saved from such an initiative. Prior to us, in the PC government, the fire-EMS services, including the chief, the union, and ultimately the municipality and the surrounding municipalities, argued that this would not be a good move for our city.

In the city of Calgary and in the city of Red Deer they have made similar representations to the provincial government. They made those similar representations to the NDP government, and they have also made those exact same representations to the UCP government, but the difference now is that the province is moving forward and has moved forward, in fact. I put this motion forward last fall on the Order Paper, and it is now up.

These decisions have moved forward. They are, in fact, not good for patient outcomes, as has been argued by the fire chief, the firefighters’ representatives, and city council. They are not good for response times. There are very significant concerns with the effect on response times. In fact, what this proposal will do is actually download more costs onto the city. It may – may; a very large may

– relieve AHS of some very small cost burdens. I think it's something in the order of a million and a half bucks or something, which is pretty small when one considers that there might be a significant effect on patient outcomes and response times. It also eliminates local jobs in Lethbridge, which is unhelpful in the context of double-digit unemployment.

I think, more than anything, you know, if we're going to increase response times, if we're going to potentially have a negative effect on patient outcomes, if we're going to impose more costs on a municipality – that is to say property tax payers – that folks, who are either residential or commercial, are going to be on the hook for more. In fact, the city of Lethbridge estimates it will cost us \$4.85 million per year in order to maintain the current level of service for some as yet notional cost savings at the level of AHS, that they've never been able to be super clear about. So, you know, if we're going to do all those things, the question has to be: well, have we talked to local people about this? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. This is roundly rejected by ordinary people, by people who are first responders, and here's why.

For example, a fellow named Tim in Lethbridge suffered a cardiac arrest in his home. His daughter called 911. The local dispatcher sent the closest resource, which was fire engine 2, to arrive first to the scene with three advanced life-support firefighters onboard. They worked on Tim as the nearest ambulance, which was more than 10 minutes away, headed to their location. The ALS fire crew provided CPR, delivered three shocks, and had initiated an IV, all prior to the arrival of the nearest ambulance. Tim and his wife firmly believe that Lethbridge's integrated fire-EMS and the local dispatch system played a vital role in his survival that day. Here's what Tim had to say about this: a life is way more important than centralizing.

5:10

Consider, too, the story of Earl Barton. Earl Barton related a personal story at our news conference that we hosted at the fire hall with the deputy chief and with our local first responders from the Alberta Fire Fighters Association in September 2020, Mr. Speaker. Earl Barton said that when his wife fell ill, it was a Lethbridge fire truck which showed up first on scene with its specially trained fire paramedics to help after he dialed 911 and connected with the local EMS dispatch. He was told that all the ambulances were tied up at the time of his call, and Barton recalled that the nearest one didn't arrive until a full 15 minutes later. He credited that first fire crew on scene with stabilizing his wife enough to get her to the hospital alive. Here's what Earl has to say: this system works; I don't understand why Alberta Health Services is doing what it is doing; personally, I think every citizen in this town should stand up and say no.

And, indeed, citizens have. Many have signed a petition. They have reached out to me in my constituency office, and indeed this is a view that is supported by the city of Lethbridge and a number of different both public utterances and motions passed by them over the last few months. Certainly, those stories and those views of those residents, in my view, ought to carry more weight than a few folks who haven't been able to actually adequately demonstrate that there's anything in the way of real cost savings here, and it's more just lost jobs and more costs, in fact.

I think, you know, what we find here is a missed opportunity, ultimately, to collaborate. You know, the firefighters in Lethbridge have been very clear that there absolutely might be opportunities to find efficiencies within the system to make sure that our EMS resources in particular are not being diverted either by, you know, having to wait with people in emergency or having to do long transport up to Calgary. These are all things that first responders

have been talking to us about for a long time. But in this situation we have no consultation and a missed opportunity, and that's why the residents of Lethbridge want to be heard.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has the call.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for bringing this motion before us today for discussion and highlighting specifically the fact that communities across this province have specifically stipulated when this was brought to their attention that they did not want to centralize these services. Now, I understand that the government is eagerly looking for ways to save money to be able to, you know, address the issue of spending, which is important. However, the question we have before us is: does that saving need to compromise the quality of service being implemented, given to the people of Alberta? This is what needs to be answered by this government.

Now, I understand, you know, that Ernst & Young did the review, specifically the review of Alberta Health Services, and it was their goal – very much it was their goal – to identify cost savings for this government. It begs the question, then, that when we address the issues of the bottom line, when it comes to the bottom line, who benefits? At the end of the day, we need to remember that this government and we here as the Legislature need to make sure that we are providing the best possible service and quality of service for the people of Alberta. That's why we were elected and what we were elected here to do. I find that with this government, as at so many other times when it comes to other issues, they don't address the externalities when it comes to questions of addressing the economic impacts that this will have on the people of Alberta. I get it. You want to save money. But that cannot come at the cost of the service and quality for the people of Alberta. What is even more astounding with this particular issue is the fact that communities have specifically requested that this not be done. So many times we hear from the members opposite in this House that it's so important to consult Albertans, that they need to get out there and they need to have discussions. They've criticized us on this side when we were in government for not having listened to the people of Alberta. Here we have a direct example of this here government not listening to the communities of Lethbridge, Red Deer, and – what's the other one, Member?

**Ms Phillips:** Calgary.

**Member Loyola:** Calgary, yes. Not listening to the people of Calgary and Lethbridge and Red Deer. Now, quality of service is something so incredibly important. It's important that when – and you may know this, Mr. Speaker. Having been brought up within Catholic social teaching and things like that and being young, there's this concept: subsidiarity. This particular concept focuses on the fact that the people who are closest to the problem or the issue or the challenge should be the ones that actually come up with the way to resolve it. They're the ones that come up with the solutions or the potential solutions to address the actual problems that the community is facing. Again: subsidiarity. Coming from a government and a group of members who like to stipulate that they indeed listen to Albertans so much, I find it unfathomable that here we have a direct example of them not listening to these communities, the people who are actually on the ground day in, day out, providing those services for people in their communities.

It begs the question: well, what's going on? Who are they listening to, then? If they're not listening to Albertans, Mr. Speaker, then who are they listening to? This is the question that I'm very much interested in, and I wish that members on the other side would

actually get up and speak to that very specific question. If you're not listening to the people of Alberta, who have specifically stipulated that they do not want the centralization of this service in their communities, that it's not going to lead to an improvement in the quality of service, according to them – again I go back to that concept of subsidiarity; these are the people that are directly on the ground addressing the issues and the problems that they are facing in their community – then who are the members on the other side of this House listening to? I wish that one of them would actually get up and answer this question.

You see, the problem here, Mr. Speaker, is that we get caught up in ideologies. We get caught up in the ideology, a very specific one, that, you know, savings must be made at all costs, or a group of individuals have come up with a particular way that savings will be made. It begs the question: okay; well, what other factors did they consider when making this suggestion to the government? I wish that the government would come up with a more holistic way of looking at these particular issues. Yes, I understand that you want to cut the actual amount being spent, but then why is it that Albertans are the ones that have to sacrifice when it comes to this government trying to save money? They're perfectly willing to give away billions of dollars to corporations that have produced no jobs thus far.

5:20

Their trickle-down theory doesn't seem to work even though we've told them time and again that in jurisdiction after jurisdiction after jurisdiction, attempts to use that kind of economic approach fail time and time again. They're failing Albertans when it comes to this particular issue, they're failing Albertans when it comes to their approach on their economy, they're failing Albertans when it comes to creating jobs, and they're failing Albertans when it comes to coming up with real, practical, concrete solutions to getting us out of this economic crisis, Mr. Speaker. That's the government that we have on the other side of this House. They're failing. They're ineffective.

They're ineffective when it comes to the economy, they're ineffective when it comes to creating jobs, and they're ineffective when it comes to actually making sure that Albertans are getting the quality in services that they deserve. [interjection] Some of the members on the other side are just laughing at me. They're having a heyday, because that's what they like to do when they're hit with the truth. They just like to laugh it off, off-the-cuff laugh it off. Okay. Fine. Go ahead. Do that. But more and more Albertans are waking up to the reality that the approaches that this government is taking aren't working. That's the reality that we're facing here, Mr. Speaker. The approaches to the economy that they're taking aren't working.

Now, you don't need to prove it to me, but you do need to prove it to Albertans that you have their best interests in mind. We're here to help you with that.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to the motion. I'd like to thank the Member for Lethbridge-West for bringing it forward for discussion this afternoon. I think it's a pertinent topic to discuss. I wanted to start by saying that the government, of course, values the incredible work that emergency medical professionals do to serve our residents right across this province, and before I start today, I want to take the opportunity to personally thank all EMS and first responders on behalf of all Albertans for keeping us safe and

coming to our aid in times of crisis and emergency. I also believe that it would be fair to say that all members of this Chamber are committed to providing Albertans with timely access to emergency medical services when they need it.

I want to talk a little bit about population growth. With population growth follows increased call volumes for emergency care. This is true right across our province, whether a family or an individual lives in a rural setting or in an urban centre.

I want to acknowledge the communities advocating for their current EMS systems: certainly, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Calgary. I appreciate those mayors and their passions, and actually I greatly appreciated hearing from them directly in a meeting I had the pleasure of attending last fall with the Minister of Health. It was an extensive briefing from those mayors and others on the debate around EMS systems and what would be the most efficient. It's my understanding that this consolidation, as others members have alluded to, was proposed and overturned repeatedly under previous administrations, and while I understand the issue to be complex and the pleas of those opposing this change impassioned, I believe that there are a number of substantive differences that have contributed to this decision being right for this time when it may not have been in previous administrations. I'd like to point out a few of those substantive changes for the Assembly this afternoon.

The first, I think, is a significant upgrade to the GPS system that underpins AHS's ability to dispatch, providing much more detail and accuracy, including the schematics on buildings in some places across the province. I believe that the last time this went to the Minister of Health, that GPS system had not been updated, and it was the reason for the decision to be overturned at that time. This new updated system provides greater accuracy and detail than was previously available, assisting those dispatched to respond with better information, saving critical seconds and ultimately saving lives.

As previously mentioned, I also understand that 911 calls are on the rise across the province, which makes sense as we see population growth in Alberta. The separate system demanded by the municipality is a local integrated model of emergency dispatch, which has a human element that is relied upon. That human element is an override, and I concur that it makes sense and adds responsiveness and oversight at times. However, it only does so if the system is getting one call at a time.

What happens is a call comes in and there's some confusion, and the human override is the dispatcher leaning over their shoulder and yelling across the room to somebody else to clarify, which would work if there's only one call coming in. However, with multiple calls coming in and as call volumes rise across Alberta, the opposite may in fact occur. With multiple human override interventions being the reliant methodology to ensure accuracy, we could end up with multiple people trying to yell across a crowded dispatch centre, concurrently adding confusion and chaos and costing precious, life-saving seconds.

I believe it is incumbent upon all legislators and leaders to listen for understanding and not to listen to make ourselves right, myself very much included. At times we can be blinded and entrenched in our position and ignore or discount new information which paints a fuller or more accurate picture. I am certainly no expert in EMS, so I welcome new information from all members of the Assembly and trust that my contribution this afternoon will be informative and hopefully add to the debate.

Last fall this issue and the advocacy of the municipalities was in full swing. At that time I happened to be criss-crossing Alberta, meeting with over 300 of our 338 municipalities. Not once – not once, Mr. Speaker – did I hear from other municipalities, other than



those in the motion today, about concerns over EMS. Not once did my mayor or my council in the constituency of Grande Prairie bring up concerns, and we had experienced this very same EMS centralization years before. I was told repeatedly by the mayors in question that other municipalities concurred, but I didn't hear it once from a municipal leader outside of these municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this government has done extensive work and consultation with EMS providers across the province, both within the public and the private sector. The current state of dispatch has been examined a number of times, including during the Health Quality Council of Alberta. That review was done in 2013, and then more recently the Alberta Health Services performance review was in 2019. This strategic work has led to the development of a province-wide EMS dispatch system recommendation.

The EMS dispatch system is designed to improve co-ordination of all EMS resources, allowing emergency services to dispatch the nearest available ambulance to a patient regardless of geographic boundaries. It's not just about money. It's about efficiency. It's about responsiveness. It's about patient-centred care. By moving forward with plans to consolidate 911 EMS dispatch services, AHS will be able to more effectively co-ordinate air ambulances, medical first responders partners, transfers between health facilities, and community paramedics who are specially trained to provide a wide range of diagnostics and treatment in patient homes.

EMS dispatch also has the ability to involve real-time physician consultation on emergency calls to ensure that patients get the highest quality of care when they need it. Consolidating dispatch services will increase capacity for current EMS resources and is expected to lead to better patient outcomes as I said before.

A growing demand among patients for enhanced emergency services and greater participation in their health care is placing further pressure on health care systems to find ways to become more patient-centred. I believe this is one way through this government's partnership with AHS we've been able to work together to present the data needed to support this patient-centred decision. The AHS review recommendation has validated earlier reports that supported dispatch consolidation for improved patient care and health integration.

I would say that sometimes when something's working, we are hesitant to change it. Why fix what's not broken? However, if there's a possible improvement, we have a responsibility to look at that. The added resources will go a long way to ensure we can respond to residents in their time of need, provide a safe delivery of care, and will hopefully provide an immediate impact on the stressors that front-line emergency staff are currently facing. This change is really about Albertans and providing the best care to 911 callers and patients.

5:30

I want to assure this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that there have been no delays in ambulance response times throughout the province. Patients who need emergency assistance can continue to call 911 for immediate help. Response times are not just an indicator of patient outcome but also serve as an indicator of workload. The decision to move towards a province-wide dispatch system will allow both rural and urban ambulance services to maintain consistency and ensure sustainability of EMS dispatch services across all communities. In fact, a borderless system complemented by a consolidated dispatch provides improved medical oversight and better continuity for all residents of Alberta.

The role of an emergency dispatcher involves prioritizing and dispatching 911 calls for basic life support and advanced life support ambulances as well as communicating with other first responder agencies. All calls are triaged – I will say that again: all

calls are triaged – from the greatest life-threatening call to the most low-level acuity call. With this new model of dispatch, the relationship and the exchange of information with law enforcement agencies will not change. The model is the same throughout the province, including local law enforcement agencies and the RCMP.

Dispatchers ensure that the right people and the right resources arrive on the scene. They accomplish this by sending the appropriate emergency vehicle to the scene as fast as possible. EMS co-ordinates with other first-responder agencies such as fire, police, or search and rescue to ensure the best patient response possible. Alberta Health Services is responsible for the operation and delivery of EMS in our province. It is their mission to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

I also think it's important to note that in Canada there are currently no established average wait times for an ambulance. Instead, there are only average benchmarks and standards of care that EMS responders strive to meet, depending on the severity of the call. By consolidating dispatch services, AHS will see every available resource in real time and will always send the closest paramedics who are best equipped to help.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen, followed by Lethbridge-East, perhaps.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Motion 516, brought forward by my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West. I look forward to actually hearing from other members of the Assembly, particularly those representing the areas of Lethbridge and Calgary and Red Deer, because, of course, those are the local concerns that we're hearing about which have led to this motion here today.

I also want to begin by thanking the Member for Grande Prairie for providing that background and that information as well as for beginning her comments by indicating how much the increase of population places pressure on services that are provided to individuals and how population growth requires, perhaps, additional resources to make sure that services are properly provided to the level and quality that Albertans expect. I hope that that is reflected in all that this government does.

As we dig into the proposed budget that was brought forward from this government in the coming days, I think we will find that ignoring population growth is perhaps the mantra of this government, because we know that when it comes to education, when it comes to health care, when it comes to AISH, when it comes to children in care, ignoring population growth and caseload pressures is precisely what this government is balancing their budget on. They're balancing it on the backs of Albertans by cutting services and quality. So I'm happy to hear that at least one member of the government caucus appears to at least recognize the role of population growth.

Further to that, I also would like to comment on my appreciation for the Member for Lethbridge-West bringing this forward. That member has proven herself time and time again in this Assembly to be truly responsive to the local needs of her constituents and to be a fearless and fierce advocate on behalf of her constituents over and over again. I'd like to commend her for once again bringing forward their concerns in this Assembly.

To that point, I, like many other Albertans, Mr. Speaker, have heard and followed this story of the changes that have been put in place by AHS to consolidate the delivery of emergency medical services in these areas. I've also heard the fierce advocacy of the mayors of the municipalities that are represented, who are deeply

concerned about the effect that consolidating these emergency medical services is going to have on the people that they serve. What is very compelling for me, not living in a municipality, not representing a municipality that is affected by this motion today, is to hear that they are driven and motivated almost entirely out of deep concern about services for their citizens being delivered properly and effectively.

This is not about jurisdiction. It's not about money. It's simply about what is going to serve the people that they are elected to represent. I invite all members of this Assembly to take that in mind as well when they speak in this Legislature and when they make decisions such as this, because while I appreciate that the Member for Grande Prairie went through a lot of background, when I look at what the core of this decision is, what was the rationale behind the decision to consolidate, I go back to that Ernst & Young report. When I look at that Ernst & Young report that was delivered, that reviewed the health services in Alberta – and it's the one that recommended that EMS services be consolidated – it didn't speak about patient care. It didn't speak about any of that.

In fact, if I were to look – and I'm going to cite, Mr. Speaker, from the Ernst & Young report. Looking at their recommendation 13, it says that

AHS has identified an opportunity to consolidate four contracted EMS dispatch centres . . . to reduce costs.

- The workload currently handled through service agreements with the City of Calgary, City of Lethbridge, City of Red Deer and [another municipality] is duplicative of what AHS' EMS communications centers currently provide and can be consolidated and managed by AHS.

Further, it goes on to say:

- From an efficiency perspective, AHS would spend less time administering agreements and working with four external agencies on dispatch operations and performance management.

When we look, Mr. Speaker, at what the heart and the rationale of this decision to consolidate EMS services is, it's about efficiency and costs. That's all that it's about. It's clearly what is the basis of that recommendation. That's why they're doing it. It's to save money. It is not driven by what is best for the individuals who live in these municipalities. It is not driven by reducing the wait times that a person in an emergency situation might be facing. It is not driven by that. It's about cost savings.

On the other side of the argument, Mr. Speaker, are mayors of these municipalities, who are driven by what is best for the people that they represent. Their concern comes solely from that perspective of: "How will the people in my municipality be affected? Will their wait times be longer? Will individuals in emergency situations be forced to wait longer and potentially face greater consequences?" That is what's driving them, to the point that, I believe, the mayor of Lethbridge actually indicated: "You know what? If this is a cost thing, we'll pay the costs." That's what the mayor of Lethbridge said. It's not about money saving. They said: we are willing to take the costs on ourselves because we believe that this is so important to the people that live in this city. That's what's motivating them.

On the other side, what's motivating the government, what's motivating this decision is to save some pennies. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is consistent with what we've seen all along from this government. They're making decisions on paper. They view the governance of this province, they view governing the people of this province, representing the people, serving the public good as a paper exercise. How do we know that? Well, we've seen countless examples. In the less than two years that this government has been in place, how many examples have we now seen of this government

making a decision on paper and not speaking to the people of Alberta and finding out what it means for them in their lives?

I could throw off a few examples right now, Mr. Speaker. How about the big one? Coal. How about the big coal policy? That change, which they thought was just crossing a little line off a piece of paper: "Repeal that. Rescind that little coal policy that's been in place since 1976. We'll do it on a Friday before the May long weekend. Nobody will notice. We won't talk to anybody. It's okay." It wasn't even about saving money. "Maybe we can attract those coal mining companies that we've been talking to for a few months before we even did this. Before we talked to anybody who might be affected, we talked to those coal companies. They might want to do a little bit of digging in the eastern slopes of our Rockies. Why don't we just let them do it? We won't talk to anybody about it. That's fine. Nobody will notice." That's the approach that this government took.

5:40

Well, Albertans noticed. Albertans really noticed, and for – I don't know – I think it was the third time in two months we saw the government have to do a full reversal. Although let's be clear; they haven't done a full reversal. They're pretending that they have, but they're not because they haven't actually committed to the fact that they've said that there'll be no mountaintop mining. But what about the slopes? What about that kind of mining – they're being a little bit quiet about that – or about the coal leases that they already granted that are going forward, that happened in that magical little interim period of time when they repealed that policy and thought nobody would notice? So there is one reversal.

How about parks? How about the decision to quietly – I don't know; I forget the term that the government is using now, Mr. Speaker. It's changed terms so many times: delist, put out to tender to private operators. I can't remember. But Albertans knew what they were saying. They were selling their parks. Everybody knew that, and that was very clear. Again, they thought nobody would notice. They didn't talk to Albertans, and – guess what? – Albertans spoke up. They made a decision based on paper about saving a little bit of money here and there, thinking that nobody would notice.

This is exactly the same thing, Mr. Speaker. Once again they say – well, they got the accountants. They got Ernst & Young to take a look and do some penny-pinching and do some number crunching, and they came up with: "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you can save this money to be more efficient and to reduce costs. Let's ignore the human impact of the decisions we're making." Well, thankfully, the mayors of Red Deer and Calgary and Lethbridge have been very vocal in standing up for the people that they represent, and they said: actually, these penny-pinching measures that you're taking over here have real-life consequences for the people in our cities, so we're going to stand up and we're going to say no. That's actually what governance is about. It's not just about treating people like lines on a paper, where you can just cut a few people off supports here and there, you can deindex AISH, or, you know, you can just: that's okay; it's just saving some dollars there. It's actually about serving the people that you represent.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very common-sense motion. It's a common-sense motion to say: stop what you're doing, stop what you've done on paper, and listen to the people of these municipalities. Listen to the people of Red Deer and Lethbridge and Calgary, who are saying: this is going to affect our lives. Listen to the mayors of those cities, who are speaking up very eloquently on behalf of the people they represent. I invite the members representing those same areas in this Legislative Assembly to also stand up and speak and tell me what they're hearing from their constituents, tell this House what they're hearing from their

constituents, because I believe right now the mayors are truly reflecting what the people in their city care about, and they care about making sure that the people are safe and get services when they need them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has the call.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lethbridge-West for bringing forward this important issue for discussion and debate here in the House. Emergency dispatch is a critical need for every community, whether it be for our large metros, Calgary and Edmonton, our mid-size cities like Lethbridge and Red Deer, or our rural and northern communities like Peace River and others. Immediate access to reliable, well-equipped emergency services is of extreme importance to all Albertans, myself, and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. With this in mind, I would like to discuss a number of individual ideas to break down this debate.

Number one, Motion 516 “[urges] the government to take into consideration the views of the residents of Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer.” While I agree that this consideration is an important element in the management of any major decision, it implies that two major factors were overlooked: one, that these four regions were not included in multiple discussions over a number of years that this direction was to be implemented – this is completely incorrect; AHS began this consolidation process over a decade ago, beginning in 2009 – and two, that the part has the ability to overrule the whole. Alberta is a large province with multiple interests on many levels. Many of these are competing and at opposition to one another. In nearly every ministry decisions must be made that take into consideration the views of each of the many interests of individuals, and then a direction must be established that is in the best interests of the whole.

While unanimous decisions are preferred, I’ve rarely witnessed this utopia to be a regular reality, and we should be wary of small numbers taking the majority hostage. Each region is distinct and has a strategically different challenge. Calgary, for instance, already has an EMS dispatch and retains it, just under a different office, now to be moved under Alberta Health Services instead of under the municipality. While efficiency and timing are a concern for any jurisdiction, modern technology has made most of this region’s concerns unwarranted, and I fail to see the true weight of these concerns other than to be obstructionary.

Red Deer is the fourth-largest city in Alberta, centred between Edmonton and Calgary, and while seeking independence and validity for its population and the needs of those who seek this service, they remain within two hours of two large metro destinations, again well served. While co-operation and co-ordination are paramount, technical efficiencies should answer these concerns.

I do believe that Lethbridge should be considered as a hub for health services for southern Alberta. Lethbridge is two and a half hours from Calgary and serves a population of nearly 350,000 people, from southeastern B.C. to southwestern Saskatchewan. Lethbridge is a hub for all kinds of other services. It is distinct and needed and must be recognized to stand independently while working in collaboration to the services provided in Edmonton, Calgary, and the north region.

Having stated these unique situations, I believe that the solutions for each area should be different, and as in all areas the continued direction of finding efficiency, saving costs, and the collaboration of services should be forefront.

Two, Motion 516 does not consider additional services and methodologies that are part of the solution and that are utilized to meet the needs of citizens across the province. What I’m referring to specifically are interfacility transfers and ambulance usage. These critical services require time, equipment, and crews. They incur costs, usage of supplies, and demand that priorities are established and ordered. These are absolutely critical factors in the larger planning and working of the entire Alberta Health Services system, and that demands that each part function seamlessly as part of the whole.

To address the timely demand that emergencies often dictate, partner services like STARS, HALO, and HERO are also crucial. They provide service to areas otherwise not quickly reachable. Their utilization, speed, and support staff are nothing less than heroes, and these services must be utilized to the utmost efficiency to answer the specific realities we face in our province of size and sparsity of population. Many of our northern regions face these challenges in a most significant way. I would like to thank the minister for looking closely at these two services and how they relate to the holistic solution that we are looking for.

Three, I believe that the solution must be forward looking, with innovation, collaboration, and effective change. Staying the same does not meet these needs. This motion does not acknowledge the fact that the consolidation of services does save money. Staff in three physical offices saves enormous cost over staff in seven offices doing the same thing. Additionally, the seamless integration of these parts into the whole is also a strong systematic efficiency.

Technology has evolved significantly in the last 10 to 15 years: videoconferencing, multiple-person virtual access, screen and information sharing. This pandemic has shown us how much more we are capable of if we are forced to. We must take these learnings forward and maximize them. I submit that the solution is for AHS to do more, be more collaborative, be more engaged and co-operative with local fire and police dispatch, share more vital information more quickly. In this way we can do more working together.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer, and others should be part of the solution, but their views are not greater than the whole. Cost savings and efficiencies must be sought while also working in co-operation, integration, co-ordination, and with better use of technology. This is not an either/or scenario. We cannot go back. We cannot stop here. We must continue to move forward and do things better, and that is why I do not support this motion.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion, and I am very happy to be following the members for Edmonton-Whitemud and, previous to that, Lethbridge-West because I thought they articulated extremely well why this bill is problematic. They’ve identified that it is not an issue of listening to the concerns of citizens – in fact, it’s the exact opposite – and it’s not really about health care. It’s actually about saving a few dollars, and those few dollars actually amount to only \$6 million. That’s it. In a budget that we have in this province, that is a pittance.

**5:50**

But I know that the government wishes to shave some dollars, so I have a suggestion for them. Just did some quick looks here. Did you know that the cost of a low-weight baby in the NICU in the province of the Alberta, using the government of Alberta’s own

numbers that are available at Open Alberta, is approximately \$33,000 per year? And do you know that to save that \$6 million, we would only have to reduce the number of children born with a low weight by 120 a year to save that money? In the province of Alberta we have 53,000 children born each year, and approximately 6 per cent of them are low-weight babies, which means that we have 3,180 low-weight babies per year in the province of Alberta. If they wanted to save the \$6 million, they would simply have to create a maternal wellness program that reduced low-weight babies in the province of Alberta by 4 per cent. That's it. One maternal health program that had a success rate of 4 per cent would save the same amount of money.

And what other benefits would it have? Opening up beds in the NICU. What other benefits would it have? Reducing the stress and the trauma of mothers and fathers throughout the province of Alberta. If this government cared about the dollars, they would actually create a maternal health program, and if we had a maternal health program, we would have healthier families, we would have healthier babies, and we wouldn't be sitting here defying the mayors of Calgary and Lethbridge and Red Deer, who have all stood up and said: this is an atrocious decision.

Here we have a government that is not only not listening to the people in the province of Alberta but is actually defying their representatives in order to save money that could easily be saved with a proactive, positive program that would not only have the benefit of saving that same \$6 million but would actually help us have healthy citizens in this province and have children born who do not need the attention of NICU and do not use up all of those resources and do not use up the resources of subsequent costs, because one of the things that I want to point out here is that I only talked about the costs of the child in the NICU. Having done some research in my PhD work around this very topic of children in the NICU, I can tell you that the costs of children who have gone through the NICU over many years, over a lifespan, reach into the millions per child. In fact, if we were to prevent one child from a serious spell of, let's say, 90 days in the NICU and therefore avoid all the lifetime of complications, one child's costs over a lifetime would be greater than the \$6 million being saved by this government.

If you care about Albertans and you care about the health of Albertans, you will take this decision off the table and replace it with a maternal health care program that helps to prevent even one child from having to spend a significant period of time in the NICU because they did not get the health services that they needed when the mother was pregnant or during the delivery time. It's that simple. You have that choice in front of you.

We know that this decision is not about the well-being of citizens of the province of Alberta. It's not supported by the representatives of the province of Alberta in Red Deer, it's not supported by the representatives of the province of Alberta in Lethbridge, and it's not supported by the representatives of the citizens of this province in Calgary, which constitutes more than a third of all of the people in the province of Alberta. All of that is being defied in order to save money that could be better saved by actually doing something for people rather than taking services away from people.

I would really love to see this government for once take a step back, do some real mathematics, which I know is very, very unusual for this particular government, and try to actually save money by doing something rather than withdrawing something. It's something we do not see this government do. We don't see them actually make a plan for the future, act in a proactive way to make life better for all Albertans. This is not a future-focused government. They continue to fail to put the effort in to describe policies which will create and uplift all the people in this province,

instead constantly withdrawing services so that they can satisfy some rigid ideological perspective which has been demonstrated to be faulty repeatedly throughout North America.

I will end my comments at this time.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, you know, when you come to this late of a time, you can try and seek unanimous consent. Hopefully, we can collaborate and work so that we can all get to our dinner breaks, but we'll see. If I request unanimous consent for one-minute bells, we'll see where we get ourselves.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have utilized 55 minutes of debate, and that means that pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) the mover of the motion has up to five minutes for debate.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to close debate.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise. We've had some conversations about the costs that AHS has indicated that they will save, and as I indicated, those have been litigated both in this House and by a number of the municipalities given that the integrated fire-EMS dispatch has also saved AHS money over the years. For example, if Lethbridge were to bill AHS for the times that a fire unit was dispatched to a medical emergency, it would cost \$2.3 million in 2019. We have, you know, representations that there might be \$5 million or \$6 million saved by AHS throughout the region.

The fact is that this integrated model serves 21 communities. I toured our public safety communications centre in the city of Lethbridge with some of those rural Reeves and mayors, and they, too, had significant concerns about what was going to be downloaded onto our property tax base. In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, I brought this motion because I do not want to let it go by that the city of Lethbridge and surrounding area, homeowners and businesses, are going to be paying more property taxes through a bureaucratic decision made by the Alberta Health Services.

And you can dress it up however you want, but the fact of the matter is that as a result of this, we are going to pay more. How much more? There will be additional support to the 911 centre. There'll have to be about \$750 million annually for that public safety communications centre, according to the city of Lethbridge. We will have to hire additional firefighters. There will be other deferred costs to the taxpayer. Adding all of this together, the city of Lethbridge estimates that we will be on the hook for \$4.85 million a year in order to maintain the current level of service.

Now, nobody elected me, Mr. Speaker, from the city of Lethbridge to stick them with a \$5 million property tax bill for some as yet notional bureaucratic bean-counter's representation that there might be 5 million bucks province-wide in addition to compromising patient outcomes, not listening to firefighters and paramedics, and costing us jobs in the city of Lethbridge. It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that folks from southern Alberta across the way think that it was their job to get re-elected to stick the city of Lethbridge taxpayers for the \$5 million bill.

Thank you.

6:00

**The Speaker:** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

There will be three minutes of debate on Motion Other than Government Motion 516 the next time there is private members' business.

The legislative policy committees will convene tonight and tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. Tonight the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Transportation in the Grassland Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]



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