



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 15, 2021

Day 84

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  
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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)  
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
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Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)  
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Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)  
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
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Deputy Government House Leader  
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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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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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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  
Gotfried  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sabir  
Smith

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
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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  
Gotfried  
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  
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Issik  
Loewen  
Singh  
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 15, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

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

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Legislative Assembly 115th Anniversary

**The Speaker:** Members, before we begin today, I would just like to highlight something for everyone. It's a very auspicious occasion. I'm sure that all of you woke up this morning with a sense of anticipation and excitement in your heart as today, March 15, marks exactly 115 years ago for the very first sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, when 25 members assembled here, representing about 185,000 Albertans. They took their seats for the very first time in the newly formed province of Alberta. Of course, we all know that that was not right here in this Chamber but in a temporary Chamber not that far from here. That was the Thistle Roller and Ice Rink.

Following the humble beginnings, the Assembly would move to the McKay Avenue school for several years before the Legislative Assembly and Chamber were completed in 1912. Since that day over a century ago only 954 members have ever had the honour of serving the people of this great province. While not all of us are in our seats because of the public health guidelines, today 87 of us represent these seats, representing more than 4.4 million people during this the 30th Legislature. While the province and certainly this Assembly have seen many changes since 1906, I find it interesting that the average age of members has not changed much in the past 115 years. In fact, the average age of members in 1906 was 46 years, three months, and 19 days whereas today we are slightly more sage and seasoned, with 46 years, four months, and one day. May we put that extra month of experience to good use as we continue to serve the good people of Alberta.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would just like to note that the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has asked for permission to dress in a less formal way today.

The hon. the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has a statement to make.

**Bob Ridley**

### Jackpots for Junior Hockey

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 27 a notable Hatter celebrated a milestone that few achieve. Bob Ridley, the beloved announcer of the Medicine Hat Tigers, called his 4,000th game. Since 1970 Mr. Ridley has used his gift to paint a picture in his listeners' minds and eloquently kept fans on the edge of their seats even in the most lopsided games. In the past 50 years Mr. Ridley's voice has given radio life to former and current NHLers like Tyler Ennis; Trevor Linden; my favourite, Darren Helm; Kris Russell; Jay Bouwmeester; Kelly Hrudey; and hall of famer Lanny McDonald and helped fuel the dreams of hockey fans for decades. Our beloved Tigers are fortunate to have such a consummate pro calling games and driving the team bus. He truly is a celebrity in our community.

With Mr. Ridley's major accomplishments in mind I am excited that the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women announced the jackpots for junior hockey, a series of province-wide 50-50 draws in support of junior hockey in Alberta. The Western Hockey League and the Alberta Junior Hockey League are vital steps in developing young Canadian hockey players as they pursue their dream of playing professional hockey. Our local teams are loved and treasured pieces of our community, both urban and rural. Junior teams in our province rely almost entirely on ticket sales to stay viable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has kept fans from enjoying in-person games and put a financial crunch on almost every junior hockey club in the province. Jackpots for junior hockey will go a long way to meet the funding shortfall and keep these teams viable postpandemic. By visiting [whl.ca/50-50](http://whl.ca/50-50) and buying \$5-, \$10-, \$20-, or even \$50-tickets, all Albertans from every corner of the province can help support the organizations woven into the social and economic fabric of our communities. So get your tickets now. There is a draw on every weekend in March, and you can help make sure that kids across Alberta can continue to chase their dreams and excite fans in places like Brooks and Medicine Hat. Besides, who couldn't use an extra few bucks to buy yourself a new Medicine Hat Tigers or Brooks Bandits jersey?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Members' Remarks

**Ms Hoffman:** Nearly 20 years ago, when I was studying to become a teacher, I remember my two largest takeaways were that, one, teachers need to reflect – reflect every day on your lessons, on your students' connection with the content, and on what you can do differently the next time you teach that subject matter to help even more students connect – and two, that we must foster a culture of critical thinking in our classrooms and our society. The concept of critical thinking isn't new. We probably all had a parent tell us in response to something unwise we once did: if your friends jumped off a bridge, would you follow?

We see this when stand-in ministers read talking points that disrespect the truth; when government members tell students, staff, and families in overcrowded classrooms that everything is fine;

when they tell students struggling without an educational assistant or tell a student with more than 40 peers in their science 10 class or tell a student who's struggling with their mental health who can't get in to see a counsellor the same stale talking points. Think critically, please, colleagues. To the government members who are preparing to read out talking points: I ask them to stop and reflect. Reflect on what you are doing in this place, reflect on the many people who helped you get elected and on what inspired you originally to run for office, and reflect on the latest embarrassment that your government had with regard to suing Netflix over a children's cartoon.

My call today is to the government caucus. Instead of continuing to allow the energy war room to embarrass Albertans, tell the Premier that he made a mistake and that it's time to cut bait. Think critically about what's going to actually attract international investment, and stop with the petty fights. Going after a children's cartoon is beneath the office of the Premier, and it's beneath all of us as members of this Assembly. What Albertans deserve is a government that's going to focus on jobs, economic diversification, and strengthening our education system. Please, Premier, take the Bigfoot out of your energy war room.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has the call.

### Energy Independence

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's energy industry has the ability to enable Canada to be energy independent and has already been providing much-needed revenue and jobs for all Canadians. Alberta's natural resources are extracted in the most ethical, environmentally conscious fashion compared to any other jurisdiction in the world, something all Albertans should be proud of. Instead, Canada's eastern provinces import these same resources from foreign nations that do not uphold the same values that Canadians proudly live by. Canadian provinces are importing hydrocarbon products from nations like Saudi Arabia, where they're practically using slave labour from South Asian nations to extract their resources to maximize their profits. Saudi Arabia itself is known for poor human rights standards, specifically their medieval treatment of female and LGBTQ citizens, something all Canadians should be against.

1:40

It was so disappointing to see Energy East get cancelled, leaving Ontario and Quebec at the mercy of line 5, which is now being threatened with being shut down. Meanwhile parades of environmentally damaging tankers originating out of the Middle East float down the St. Lawrence River. These large tankers, that have migrated across the Atlantic to Canadian ports, are amongst the largest polluters in the world, the shipping industry. The shipping industry is responsible for over 3 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions in the world. These ships burn super-dirty fuels that create extremely bad atmospheric pollution. Noise from these ships debilitates the sensitive hearing of whales and dolphins. These tankers fill their ballast from foreign coastal waters, on average 1,000 metric tonnes of water filled with foreign species and bacteria and chemicals, and then discharge their ballast in our waters, in our St. Lawrence Seaway, damaging Canada's aquatic ecosystem.

When Canadians take environmental and ethical concerns seriously, they will be met with guarantees that other exporters cannot meet. It's guaranteed that Canada's resources are harvested and distributed to the highest standards to ensure environmental damage is minimal and that the practice is sustainable, it's guaranteed

that those harvesting and transporting these resources are treated humanely by their employers, and it's guaranteed that Canadians and their families from coast to coast will benefit from an energy-sovereign Canada.

Thank you.

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

### School Construction Capital Plan and Northeast Calgary

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is continuing to ignore the needs of northeast Calgary. They have failed to support the residents in rebuilding from the fourth-largest natural disaster in Canadian history. The Premier blamed northeast Calgary for the spread of COVID-19 and has continually refused to apologize. Now we see that this UCP government is doing nothing to support the students and families in northeast Calgary.

The communities of Cityscape, Skyview, and Red Stone have for a long time needed more schools in their communities. These communities are developing communities in Calgary, and the UCP is failing to recognize this with support, resources, and even an understanding of or respect for what these communities and families need. While our government worked to expand schools in northeast Calgary during our time in office, these schools are already over capacity, and there is a need for more.

Many of my constituents and area residents waited for Budget 2021 to see if the UCP government was finally going to stand up and support the communities and residents of northeast Calgary, Mr. Speaker, only to be let down by this government. This government provided no new schools to Calgary and no new schools for northeast Calgary, nothing to address the over capacity in schools, nothing to provide relief to families in northeast Calgary. Students are being bused hours a day out of the schools across Calgary because of this government's failure to support these residents, which will impact their long-term learning.

The UCP talks a big game about supporting these communities, but in actuality there is little action to back up these claims. While the UCP continues to blame and disrespect my constituents, Alberta's Official Opposition will continue to push them to do the right thing. One place they need to start is by ensuring that my constituents and residents in northeast Calgary have the schools and education they need.

Thank you.

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

### Nowruz

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a happy note, with a spring in my step and optimism ahead because this coming Saturday, March 20, is the ancient Persian holiday of Nowruz, celebrated at the exact moment of the spring equinox. Many Albertans and folks around the world celebrate this important season of renewal and excitement and of the reminder of brighter days ahead.

Traditionally those who celebrate Nowruz will engage in [remarks in Persian] to prepare their haft-sin, or table, in these days leading up to the ancient celebration. While I was in Iran, I was able to experience much of this hospitality and many of the traditional foods associated with Nowruz, including in Tabriz and Mashhad, where I ate the sweets that these communities prepare so that they can sweeten their year in the days to come. Many Albertans of Persian, Afghan, Azeri, Tajik, and other communities have come to Alberta with long traditions of gathering with friends and loved

ones to bring the new year in in good spirits although this year will likely be different.

I hope this spring brings brighter days ahead for all of us. With Nowruz and spring swiftly approaching, I encourage Albertans to embrace the optimism that comes with this season. The last year has been full of hardships and trials for all Albertans. Let's embrace the hope and possibilities that come with a new year. Let's charge into this new year and this season in good spirits and take the bull by the horns. For those who celebrate, whether you say, "Happy Nowruz" or [remarks in Persian]," I wish you a happy Nowruz, and for the rest of us, I wish everyone a very happy spring.

### Le Drapeau Franco-albertain

**Ms Renaud:** Mars était proclamé le Mois de la francophonie albertaine en 2018 en premier comme un moyen de reconnaître l'histoire riche et les contributions culturelles de la francophonie dans notre province. Il y a beaucoup de communautés francophones prospérantes en Alberta, telles que Legal, Falher, St. Paul, et Beaumont, entre autres. Ma propre circonscription de St. Albert partage une connexion historique profonde avec la francophonie, puisque quelques-uns des premiers colonisateurs étaient franco-canadiens. Et plus qu'un sur huit des albertains sont d'origine française ou franco-canadienne. De la Fête franco-albertaine, à cInéMAGINE, et au Carnaval de St-Isidore, la Francophonie de l'Alberta continue d'enrichir l'héritage culturel d'Alberta.

Malheureusement, la pandémie a affecté cette communauté. Avec les événements reportés ou annulés, le gouvernement et la Législature doivent montrer leur soutien pour la francophonie.

Bien que les franco- et anglo-albertaines ont été reconnaissants que le drapeau franco-albertain soit levé dans la place capitale ou au Centre McDougall à Calgary le premier jour de mars, il flottait pour juste une journée. C'est la politique de ce gouvernement de flotter un drapeau d'une association pendant un seul jour pour commémorer les occasions spéciales, mais ce drapeau est différent. En 2017 le drapeau était reconnu comme un symbole de distinction en Alberta. Étant un emblème officiel de notre province, le gouvernement doit flotter le drapeau pour la totalité du Mois de la francophonie albertaine.

Pendant ce temps difficile la francophonie de l'Alberta a besoin de et mérite notre soutien. J'appelle au gouvernement de restaurer le drapeau pour le mois du mars.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] March was first proclaimed as Alberta Francophonie Month in 2018 as a way of recognizing the rich history and cultural contributions of Francophonie in our province. There are many thriving Francophone communities in Alberta, from Legal and Falher to St. Paul and Beaumont, among others. My own riding of St. Albert has a deep historical connection with Francophonie as some of the first settlers there were French-Canadian. And more than 1 in 8 Albertans are of French or French-Canadian origin. From La Fête Franco-Albertaine to cInéMAGINE to the Carnaval de Saint-Isidore, Alberta Francophonie continues to enrich Alberta's cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has affected this community. With events postponed or cancelled, the government and the Legislature must show their support for Francophonie.

While Franco- and Anglo-Albertans appreciated that the Franco-Albertan flag was raised in capital plaza and at Calgary's McDougall Centre on March 1, it was only flown for that day. It is policy of this government to fly organizations' flags for only one day to commemorate special occasions, but this flag is different. In 2017 the flag was recognized as a symbol of distinction in Alberta.

Being an official emblem of our province, the government should fly the flag for the entirety of Alberta Francophonie Month.

During this difficult time Alberta's Francophonie both needs and deserves our support. I call on the government to restore the flag for the remainder of March and to show respect and give their support to one of Alberta's oldest and most vibrant communities. [As submitted]

### Project Jack and Jill for Airdrie Graduates

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an organization in my constituency, Project Jack and Jill. I am beyond impressed with their dedication to assisting students with the costs associated with graduation. Earning a high school diploma is a significant milestone, and every graduate deserves to celebrate their accomplishment and be recognized for their achievement.

In 2016 Mike Reist learned of a young man who needed a suit for graduation. He reached out to the local Airdrie Dads group, and before long, members had raised \$500 to support this graduate. The experience stuck with Mike, and he spearheaded the Airdrie Dads adopt-a-grad initiative ahead of the 2018 grad season. The inaugural drive had a modest goal of raising \$1,000. Community response was overwhelming and resulted in \$7,000 raised, providing 16 students with suits, haircuts, and corsages for their dates. The remaining funds were distributed to Airdrie high schools to provide grad tickets for families who could not otherwise afford them.

Community members also donated over 350 new or gently used suits, and Mike's wife, Lori Reist, began collecting gowns for young women. Project Jack and Jill was born. In partnership with Airdrie Dads adopt-a-grad, local businesses, and tremendous community support, the 2019 grad season saw \$17,000 raised, assisting more than 50 students from Airdrie and the surrounding area.

Project Jack and Jill has done a remarkable job of raising awareness and supporting families in Airdrie that may require a little help. COVID-19 may have complicated matters, but they want students and families to know that their community is behind them. With the 2021 grad season closing in quickly, I invite everyone to visit their website, [projectjack&jill.org](http://projectjack&jill.org), and consider making a donation and investing in a future community leader.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Coal Development Policies

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's NDP has announced that we'll be bringing forward legislation this session to protect our mountains and water from this government's plan for open coal pit mining. The government decided to strip-mine our Rocky Mountains in secret. They made deals with Australian billionaires to shut out Albertans. Our bill will put a stop to any coal developments and exploration of these critical and beautiful areas. To the Premier: will you support a ban on all coal development in the Rocky Mountains? Yes or no?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we'll look at any piece of private members' legislation that comes forth, the same way that we do all private members' bills that come forward. It has to go through the committee process first. I encourage all members to take the time to look at this piece of legislation to see whether or not it is worthy of

the Chamber. We don't step on the private members' committee's process. I will point out, though, that my understanding is that this is private member's Bill 218, which shows that the NDP is not truly, actually committed to moving private members' legislation through this place. If this is a very important piece of legislation, I suggest they make it 214.

1:50

**Ms Hoffman:** Doesn't sound like a yes, Mr. Speaker.

This is about protecting our most sensitive natural areas for future generations. We're acting because the government won't. The UCP quietly rescinded the 1976 Loughheed coal policy on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend. They only announced consultations now because they got caught. The government is supposed to begin consultations in two weeks, yet there's nothing on their website. Premier, Albertans have made their opinions known. They are loud, and they are clear. Are you really going to pretend that you don't know where they stand on this issue, and are you going to forge ahead with strip mining the Rockies?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, the Minister of Energy is coming forward with a consultation process at the end of this month. The NDP had four years if they wanted to do any work on coal inside the eastern slopes. They did nothing, which, again, is probably why they're using private member's Bill 218, which we all know does not stand a chance of being able to make it through this process before the end of spring because of legislation that's before that. If this is so important to the NDP, again I suggest that they take their Bill 214 and bring it forward inside this Chamber.

**Ms Hoffman:** Another major concern is the threat of coal mines and, specifically, selenium to our headwaters and the impact that this could have on drinking water. Water equals life; water equals agriculture jobs. The Premier wants to sacrifice that to make deals with billionaires who aren't even from here. A former superintendent for Banff national park said that the issue isn't a partisan one; it's about keeping our mountains intact and our water clean for future generations. To the Premier: if you won't take my questions, if you really want to make this partisan instead of doing the right thing, will you at least look into the camera and explain to Alberta's kids why you're threatening their water and . . .

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am confused. The hon. member was referring to the 1976 coal policy, which does not mention water nor have anything to do with water. Alberta has the Water Act in place inside this province. Nothing has changed within the Water Act, and nothing has changed when it comes to water allocations within the eastern slopes when it comes to coal mining. I would encourage the hon. member to educate herself on that issue. If she's serious about trying private members' legislation on this important issue, they will take the NDP Bill 214 and make that their bill on this important issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Economic Recovery and Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economic recovery is lagging behind the rest of Canada, and this Premier hasn't put forward any real plan to create jobs. We continue to have the second-highest rate of unemployment in the country. The Premier likes to blame all his failures on the pandemic – well, that and children's cartoons and

everyone else, really – but the reality is that his corporate handout is failing, and he's only now investing in the tech sector, barely, after leaving them hanging for two years. To the Premier. Your term is half over. Will you admit that your jobs strategy has been a failure?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, I just need to educate the member opposite. A recent report just came out today from National Bank saying that Alberta is going to lead the country in job growth this year and next year, and this year we're going to lead the country in GDP growth. The members opposite need to educate themselves a little bit on their recovery plan. I know he's the sole member of the capitalist caucus of the NDP over there, and you know what? Hopefully, he can see more capitalist ideas coming out of the NDP. But you know what? We believe in the private sector. The job-creation tax cut is there to send a signal. We want investment in Alberta, and we're starting to see that happen.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:54.

**Mr. Bilous:** Your track record is 50,000 jobs lost in 2019. Mr. Speaker, the government's own fiscal plan projects that our unemployment rate won't return to 2019 levels until 2024, after the end of this Premier's term, page 59. That's right: four years of the UCP, and we'll have fewer jobs, one of the slowest economic recoveries in Canada, and no new pipelines. The Premier has made mistake after mistake – his war room, the anti-Alberta inquiry, his corporate handout, his lack of vision for tech and renewable energy – and he's left small businesses to board up their doors forever. To the Premier: please explain to Alberta families why you've been so bad at creating jobs.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite likes to talk a lot about the tech sector, but let me just educate this House a little bit on this topic: 2019, a record year in venture capital; 2020 destroyed that record; and 2021 is off to an even faster start. Film and television, another diversification piece: right now we're on track for a record year in film and television. On top of that, commodity markets are turning around. Alberta is on a bounce back. It's time for that member to start looking at the reports that are coming out.

**Mr. Bilous:** Tech companies' success is despite your government.

The Premier claimed companies would be irresponsible if they didn't invest in Alberta after he put forward his failed corporate handout. He said that they would pack up and move their offices to downtown Calgary. In fact, the opposite has happened. Just today Rogers has said that they will take over Alberta-owned Shaw, and many expect layoff notices to follow. According to ATB it's even worse in the oil and gas sector. There's a 24 per cent drop in businesses located in Alberta. To the Premier: why do you continue to gamble Alberta's future away with a failed plan that is not working?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, it's a little bit rich for the members opposite over there to talk about jobs when they wouldn't say a word when Infosys announced that they were going to bring 500 jobs to downtown Calgary. They wouldn't say a word; crickets on the other end. Disappointing.

When it comes to the Rogers and Shaw transaction, we're cautiously optimistic on this one. The reason why we are: they've dedicated that they would create 3,000 jobs in western Canada, including 800 jobs here in Alberta, including a tech and engineering



hub in Calgary for 500 new jobs in Calgary. Time for them to educate themselves a little bit.

### Canadian Energy Centre

**Ms Ganley:** Mr. Speaker, since its inception the UCP energy war room has done nothing but embarrass Alberta. It has stolen logos, impersonated journalists, attacked real journalists, and much more. By any metric it is an abject failure. But last week they outdid themselves, choosing to deploy tax dollars on an attack against a children's movie about Bigfoot and his family. Premier, can you explain to struggling Alberta families how exactly attacking a children's movie creates jobs and helps grow our economy?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, there we go again: the NDP, preoccupied with things that aren't even taking place in this Chamber. They work very hard against the Canadian Energy Centre because they don't want to stick up for Alberta's oil and gas industry, because that hon. member is part of a party whose leader said, when it came to Keystone, that she didn't care, whose members protested against Northern Gateway, whose former environment minister showed up at hearings against Energy East. They don't care about the oil and gas industry or the people that work in it. We do, and we will continue to defend our largest industry.

**Ms Ganley:** I care about jobs in Alberta and investment in Alberta, and that's why I'm against the Canadian Energy Centre.

This movie, titled *Bigfoot Family*, which features Bigfoot, his son, his wife, a talking bear, and a racoon that enjoys pancakes, is now being accused of brainwashing children by an agency that the Minister of Energy is the director of. Mr. Speaker, this is a joke. I suspect it's more likely to see Bigfoot earn an elected seat in this Legislature than see an actual jobs plan from this Premier and this government. Premier, will you finally shut down the war room and spend the \$30 million on something to help Albertans, like, say, some schools in Calgary?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the government will not be lectured by an hon. member who was part of a government who hired Tzeporah Berman, a world-renowned anti oil and gas protester, to oversee the oil sands underneath her watch. The hon. member is simply trying to distract from the fact that, for example, the National Bank is forecasting that Alberta will lead the country in GDP growth. That's what the hon. member doesn't want to talk about. Instead, she wants to continue her track record and the NDP's track record of attacking oil and gas workers inside this province.

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. minister is right. I do want to talk about jobs in this Chamber, and I'll continue to talk about jobs in this Chamber.

I'd like to remind the Premier that he promised that the war room would operate with respect, dignity, and professionalism. The crack minds of the war room are currently fighting a losing battle against the sequel to *Son of Bigfoot*, which is about a young man who discovers that his father is Bigfoot and works with a group of talking forest creatures to protect him from the evil HairCo. These movies feature squirrels and woodpeckers talking. They're cartoons; as in, not real. Premier, are you really going to stand there and claim that a talking woodpecker . . .

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

2:00

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, given that the hon. member and her party have no credibility when it comes to this issue – they have a member of their caucus who has been asking for Extinction Rebellion propaganda to be taught inside our classrooms – simply no credibility when it comes to the NDP, when it comes to defending the oil and gas industry inside this province, Albertans can rest assured that their government will continue to stand up for the largest employer in this province and the largest employer in this country and will not let the NDP continue to defame the hard-working men and women who work inside that industry.

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

### Bill 57

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the government introduced Bill 57 to change the governance of Métis settlements in Alberta. There's one glaring problem: they ignored their constitutional responsibility to consult with the Métis people. Herb Lehr, head of the Metis Settlements General Council, said that despite several requests to sit down and talk about a better way forward, the minister chose to ignore them and then introduce Bill 57 without their consent. Premier, why did your minister fail to consult with the Métis people of Alberta before you introduced major legislation to change how settlements are governed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government respects the Métis history and culture. What we're looking at doing is updating their 30-year-old legislation to give them that hand up that they've always been asking for. This is empowering legislation. What we're doing is giving them the tools that they need to be successful in the future. The previous government failed to give them that help up when they were in power, so now we're working through that and on a tight timeline as their long-term agreement comes to an end. I've been constantly asked about this and what this legislation does, and basically it gives them that hand up.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Metis Settlements General Council president, Herb Lehr, said, quote: 80 years of a partnership with the government of Alberta, in one fell swoop, backwards. End quote. Minister, this is hugely concerning to the Métis and indigenous communities across the province. The Métis have made it clear that, to them, changes to the MSA are not just red tape reduction, like the minister characterized, and they do not see it as a hand up; they see it as a slap. Will the Premier promise that the government will not move forward with Bill 57 until proper consultations are done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been engaging robustly with the Métis settlements. Just two weeks ago I was up in northern Alberta, up in I believe they call it God's country up there, and I came across a logging operation, a Métis settlement logging operation, 23 young men and women out there working in the bush hard, and the one young fellow stopped me, got out of his truck. He was so proud. He said: I've got a job, and I'm helping my family; I'm earning a living. That's a true hand up, when you can go out there and see people working hard on their land. I have met with

chairmen and councils. They've had some concerns, and we've made adjustments.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can ignore the Métis people for only so long, Minister. Even before the legislation was introduced, individual Métis settlements, the ones the minister claims to have consulted with, also voiced concerns about this bill and the lack of consultation. Bypassing consultation is a serious violation of the rights of the Métis and negatively affects the relationship between them and the province. Premier, the Metis Settlements General Council has called an emergency meeting this Wednesday and invited you and your minister to attend. Can you promise right now that you will attend and honestly consult with the Metis Settlements General Council, and if they tell you the bill isn't ready to go, will you pull it?

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Originally when I met with them, we wanted to have that legislation ready for this last fall, but I gave them an extension of six months. I said, "Let's wait till spring, give you that extra chance to engage with your people out there," so we gave them that extra time to engage because we knew how important this was. The changes that we're making give them that flexibility and the options that they need to empower themselves to be in control of their own destiny. Again, what we're trying to do is work with them as much as we can to help them in various ways such as with the AIOC to give them operations and businesses where they can make their own money and be proud and not have to rely on government handouts.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has the call.

#### Budget 2021 and Oil and Gas Revenue

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Alberta's energy industry has been a significant economic driver in our province and country for a very long time, employing over 550,000 Albertans either directly or indirectly and significantly contributing to our communities, both urban and rural. To the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: can you tell Albertans how much the Alberta government's budget is reliant on revenues derived from the oil and gas industry and how this translates to how we fund other ministries?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Alberta's energy industry was hit hard by the unprecedented collapse in energy prices globally as a result of the pandemic. Our direct royalty revenues for the upcoming budget year is projected to be 7 per cent of our total revenues. By our out-year, '23-24, we're projecting that number to be 12 per cent. Indirectly the energy industry provides a major fiscal contribution to this province. Let me say to the nation as a whole that, by far, the nation's largest export is Alberta energy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. While we know how crucial it is, obviously, not to hedge our budget or our taxpayer dollars, this is why our budget is predicated on WTI

being only at \$46, but we can't help but feel pretty optimistic that right now WTI has climbed up over \$20 to \$65 a barrel. To the same minister: could you tell us what impact this welcome information could have on our province's finances and, if oil can sustain these prices, what impact this could have on Alberta's deficit?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. We've taken a very prudent, responsible, and cautious approach to the economic assumptions that have led to and informed our revenue projections for Budget 2021. As the member noted, we're using \$46 WTI in our projections. Because of the uncertainty, we've also included in Budget 2021 a low- and high-case scenario. Under the high-case scenario \$55 WTI would improve our fiscal results for the upcoming year by approximately \$3 billion.

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

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Well, given that the energy industry is clearly highly important not just to Alberta's economy and workforce but especially to the families who live in my riding of Banff-Kananaskis as many of those families work in the energy industry, own small energy companies, or invest in the energy industry but given that this industry has also been belaboured for years by antidevelopment governments and unsupportive royalty forces, again to the same minister: are there any specific measures that our government is taking to support and revive Alberta's oil and gas industry?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've taken a number of measures since we took office to position Alberta's energy industry to be most competitive. Bill 1, our first act of this Legislature, was to repeal the carbon tax. We've reduced business taxes from 12 per cent to 8 per cent, making Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in the nation. We're working with the energy industry to ensure that they have the most modernized, efficient regulatory environment possible.

#### School Construction Capital Plan and Calgary

**Ms Hoffman:** Last week the UCP announced its school capital plan for this year. However, not a single new school was announced for Calgary's largest school districts, which also happen to be the largest and third-largest in the province of Alberta. This comes despite increasing enrolment. Students are already facing overcrowded classrooms, and parents are expected to pay more in fees. Minister, why did you neglect Calgary's students in both public and Catholic schools in your budget?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Alberta Education evaluates school projects based on several objective measures. The three Calgary schools funded in Budget 2021 are desperately needed in those communities, and many of our schools are already under construction in Calgary. In fact, there are currently six projects under construction, which will create approximately 5,000 student spaces in Calgary. We are absolutely looking after Calgary's students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that the west side of Calgary is in desperate need of a high school and given that kids are being bused well outside of their communities due to the lack of capacity and given that moms like Krista Li said, “Calgary students absolutely need schools, and we need them now – not . . . 10 years” from now. The situation in west Calgary is but one of many other similar situations where parents are literally begging for schools.” Minister, why is this government ignoring Calgary parents like Krista and forcing students out of their communities on such long commutes, and why did Red Deer get two schools?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the recently announced schools, there are several school projects in the Calgary metropolitan region under construction such as Evanston elementary school, creating 600 student spaces; a north Calgary high school, creating 1,800 student spaces; Auburn Bay middle school, creating 900 student spaces; Auburn Bay elementary, creating 400 spaces; and Cochrane elementary and junior high school, creating 825 student spaces. Projects are selected using our metrics, and they are fair.

2:10

**Ms Hoffman:** Given that Evanston middle school was ranked number one for the CBE’s priority list for new schools but was ignored by the UCP in last week’s announcement and given that parents like Usman Sadiq waited years for an elementary school under previous Conservative governments only to be disappointed and given that our government fast-tracked funding for a project that is now complete in terms of that elementary school, why is the UCP continuing down the same path as previous Tory governments and turning their backs on families like Usman’s? Why aren’t you fighting for Calgary? Why did your ministers fail to get any Calgary schools in the budget?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, that’s just not so. In 2020 Calgary Catholic schools indicated their number one priority was a new high school in Airdrie. Projects are selected using Alberta Education’s advice based on enrolment pressure, health and safety, and legal commitments. We have a process in place that’s called a gated process. It is not about politics; it’s about actually addressing the needs, whether it’s health and safety. We choose to go with the gated process.

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

#### COVID-19 Variant Cases and Vaccines

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After a year of the pandemic and restrictions Albertans rightly want transparency from their government. They’re worried about variant cases, and they just want data. The Ontario government is listening. They launched a new dashboard, including detailed information on variants of concern. That government is being honest and transparent with the public but not this government and not this Minister of Health. For reasons no one can understand, he refuses to let Albertans see the data they’re paying to have collected on their behalf, so to the Minister of Health: if Ontario can be honest on variants, why won’t Alberta? What could you have to hide?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. We have 289, as of Saturday, active cases of the different variants of concern, strains in our population. We have, I think, about 40 per cent of them – no. Sorry. More than 50 per cent of them are community or close contacts of a community spread, and they’re representing right now 8.5 per cent of all of our active cases. Now, we are actually testing

100 per cent of our positive cases right now, which means we are, unlike other provinces, actually capturing all of the variants of concern right now in our testing regime. We’ve invested and made sure that our testing regime is a leader in the country, and we’ll continue to do so so we can stop the spread of the variants.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I would encourage the minister to then follow Ontario’s lead and put that information on a publicly available dashboard because Dr. Noel Gibney, one of our public health leaders, has warned that we may be headed for a third wave and given that variant cases are on the upswing but AHS is stating that they have – and I quote – no plans to change how we report variant cases of concern, to the Minister of Health. In January you promised to earn back trust and credibility from Albertans, yet we’re a year into this pandemic, the public is demanding data, but you’re keeping it hidden away. What do Albertans have to do to get some basic transparency from this government?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, we can see the variant information very clearly on the government website. I’m just looking at it right now. We have been leaders in our disclosure of information throughout the pandemic. Unlike other provinces, we have always been disclosing more and giving more transparency to Albertans so they can understand where cases are, where there’s spread in our community and where it isn’t occurring, where there is risk so we can give people in Alberta the most information they can throughout the pandemic.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that this government is certainly not providing more information to Albertans about their plans for the vaccine rollout – I can’t tell you how many e-mails I continue to get from different groups across the province of Alberta asking for more information and transparency from this government – and that they are behind multiple other provinces in that transparency and given that they’ve received awards for outstanding achievement in government secrecy, it seems the minister is bent on continuing that strategy. To the minister: what do you have to hide about variant cases and on vaccines and everything else? Why won’t you respect the public, give them the data and the information we know you have but continue to refuse to share?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. We continue to disclose more than other provinces when it comes to the variants, when it comes to the cases and the dominant strain in the province and as well on our vaccine rollout. We continue to disclose more information, and we continue to make sure that as soon as we get vaccines from the federal government, we’re getting them into the arms of Albertans as quickly as possible, which is why, unlike other provinces, which are still now just starting to roll out vaccines to people who are 85 and plus, we’re now starting to provide vaccines for people as young as 60. We’re going to continue to do that because we’re going to continue to invest in AHS and our community partners in getting the vaccines to Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne–Parkland has a question.

#### Wildfire Management Technology and Costs

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most are excited for the nice, warm days of summer that are coming soon, and I’m one of them as well. However, like many folks that live in the rural parts

of our province, we realize that with a low snowfall the risk of a forest fire is a lot higher. The use of polymer firefighting gels are effective both in action and cost reduction. In fact, *Wired* magazine recently called polymer gels the antivirus of the wildfire world. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you please provide us an update on how the polymer firefighting gels will be used this year to reduce the harmful impacts of forest fires?

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This wildfire season we're trying out two contract gel-capable helicopters. These helicopters can carry up to 1,000 gallons of water or gel to be used on new or existing wildfires. We have placed some strategically around the province based on hazard levels so that we can respond quickly when a wildfire happens. We're also considering a number of contractors to try out these water-enhancing gels right on the ground.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that forest fires can quickly become difficult to contain if not identified early and given that the resources for forest firefighting are limited and given that there are many Alberta-made solutions which could be used to lessen the impacts of fires such as drones for detection and night and low-visibility sensors and the polymer gels themselves, to the same minister: can you tell us what methods of forest fire mitigation are currently being deployed in the province?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last year 88 per cent of wildfires in Alberta were human caused, so our first line of defence is to cut down on that. But with that said, we also know that wildfires are inevitable. Alberta Wildfire is the best wildfire-fighting team in the world. They use a variety of specialized resources, including wildland firefighters, helicopters, air tankers, and other equipment, to suppress fires. They did a tremendous job last year, with 99 per cent of all wildfires in our province extinguished by 10 a.m. the following day.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that forest fires can start and spread rapidly, leading to massive devastation, and are the largest source of pollution in our province and given that the devastation of these fires comes with a considerable cost to our environment and our human and financial capital and given that polymer gels are proven to be a cost-effective suppressant of fires and would save lives, woodland, tax dollars, et cetera, to the same minister: can you please tell us what the government is doing to limit the costs associated with these forest fires?

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Wildfire continues to review and improve on how we fight wildfires. After receiving the 2019 spring wildfire review, Alberta Wildfire began implementing the recommendations. We are using both drone technology and remote automated weather stations to improve the information we are able to collect on both the weather and wildfires. Alberta also has a partnership with FPIInnovations to support wildfire operations research, which will lead to made-in-Alberta solutions.

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

### Marten Beach Flood Damage and Mitigation

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Assembly on behalf of the hard-working people of Marten Beach, who on July 25, 2019, had their lives uprooted as their community flooded and was evacuated. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs tell the Assembly about any crossministerial discussions that have taken place, any actions taken to ensure the prevention of future floods, and any work done to mitigate the damage caused by the 2019 flood in Marten Beach?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken to the municipal folks and the folks from Marten Beach, and as the hon. member rightly points out, they were flooded in both 2018 and 2019. We are considering what to do. We've had several what I thought were direct discussions with them, and we're hoping to get to a better place where this annual flooding will not happen anymore.

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

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the three existing reports that address flooding in the Marten Beach area suggest relocating high-flood-risk properties and people to higher relief areas at the end of the hamlet, can the minister comment if funding will be provided to relocate residents to higher ground in the Marten Beach area to mitigate the effects of future floods?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the Alberta emergency management authority has offered to assist the community with both advice and guidance in connecting with other parts of Alberta's government. In addition to working with the Minister of Environment and Parks, AEMA officials are working with Alberta Infrastructure to investigate the availability of potential Crown lands to relocate some of the houses. The work is under way, and I believe that the municipal folks at Marten Beach are well aware of that.

2:20

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

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the compensation for damages of many residents of Marten Beach is tied to the insurance policies of their homes and given that many homes in Marten Beach are now classified as being on a flood plain, making their properties both uninsurable and unclaimable, putting homeowners in a terrible situation of uncertainty, can the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs assure this Assembly that all reasonable measures are being taken in co-operation with local authorities to help residents of Marten Beach resolve the outstanding insurance claims before their claim periods expire this summer?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, we are working with them diligently, but I'm glad that the hon. member said "reasonably." As I pointed out in an earlier answer, some of those homes were flooded in 2018 and 2019. What's reasonable is not for the taxpayers of Alberta to replace somebody's home every year after it floods. What's reasonable is to work with the people in the homes and the municipality, and one of the ways that we're doing that is

looking for other land when their homes need rebuilding that they could be rebuilt on, lands that won't flood again in the future. That's part of the strategy we have. We think it makes sense.

### Critical Worker Benefit

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, during this pandemic our front-line heroes have been a source of inspiration. I've seen reports of health care workers being left in the dark when it comes to the critical worker benefit. According to workers at AHS there have been no updates for who is eligible or how the benefit will be received since the program was announced. With only 16 days until the program applications end, many workers are deeply concerned. Will the minister commit to addressing these concerns by the end of the day, or is supporting the heroes on the front line of this pandemic not a priority for this minister?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we want to just commend our minister of labour for all the work on this project. We put forward a program that's going to have over 300,000 people in our province eligible for up to \$1,200. This is a program of about \$465 million. We're going to continue to make sure that we work with stakeholders in this area, making sure that we get those resources out there. We want to thank each and every worker that was out there on the front lines, that was keeping everybody safe. I also want to thank them for keeping their co-workers safe, their customers safe, and people that they serve safe, too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Gray:** Given that these front-line health care workers are just trying to find out are they eligible or not, how will they receive the benefit or not, and they are concerned that silence from both AHS and this government means they may be getting left out of this program and given that this is a valid concern considering the UCP delayed accessing this resource for 287 days and given that rather than spin or conjecture this minister could provide clarity to health care heroes rather than more uncertainty during a pandemic, to the minister – a yes or no question – can you provide more information to our health care workers? Will they qualify?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, our minister of labour worked diligently with, you know, people across Alberta that have questions about the program. They'll continue to have information on websites as well as encourage people to reach out to those government resources that are there to answer questions. We've seen that as well when it came to the relaunch grant. People had questions along the way, and the people that are in these departments do amazing work getting back to people at the earliest possible opportunity. Our minister of labour is diligently working hard to make sure he gets that benefit out there to Albertans.

**Ms Gray:** Given that there has been no communication and given that thanks does not help to put food on the table and given that it's not just health care workers who've been left in the dark about this benefit by government and given that my colleagues and I have been raising numerous concerns about this government's bungled, delayed rollout of this benefit and given that when it comes to giving a benefit, it's not the thought that counts; it's actually doing it that matters, Minister, how many front-line workers will be left

out of this benefit? Do you have the numbers, and will you explain to each of them why you don't think the work they did during a deadly pandemic was critical?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 300,000 eligible workers in Alberta are going to qualify for this critical worker benefit of up to \$1,200. That's a \$465 million program. I also want to commend the government of Alberta and their efforts at the department level to get resources out to Albertans in many different areas. When it comes to the relaunch grant, over 57,000 businesses received that support. You contrast that with British Columbia: a fraction of that level of support went out. Ontario: a fraction per capita of that support went out. Our government here in Alberta is going to continue to support people on the ground in response to the pandemic.

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

### Horse-racing Industry

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association. These are good Albertans who own and raise standardbred horses, and they are key to Alberta's harness-racing industry. This industry includes feed growers, breeders, owners, jockeys, veterinarians, and track facilities. The money racing raises and gives to Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis also supports many nonprofits, so this sector is clearly a vital part of rural Alberta and our communities. To the Minister of Health: in what ways has this government stepped up to support the harness-racing industry throughout this pandemic?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Alberta really has a world-class horse-racing industry, an industry that supports the economy right across the province. It was an industry that was really hard hit by the pandemic. Because of that, we provided Horse Racing Alberta a \$7 million advance last year, in 2020, which will be repaid in upcoming periods as the industry recovers. On top of that, we provided stable, predictable funding to Horse Racing Alberta by increasing their take of gaming revenues from 40 to 50 per cent.

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association provided full and strict COVID protocols for race participants, with no public audiences, and given that those protocols were accepted and that the industry was allowed to race last year and further given that they have written again requesting permission to race based on the same approved protocols, to the minister: why have they not been permitted to race? Is there a problem with the protocols they have committed to?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We recognize the hard work and the dedication that the industry has shown. Although many businesses and activities did have good health protocols in place, the chief MOH did determine that it was advisable to limit situations where people congregated together. We've seen transmission in all sectors, including this one. We are taking a safe, cautious approach

to reopening to limit the need to bounce back and forth between easing and tightening restrictions if we move too fast in reopening. We recognize that racing is an important part of people's lives, and we'll look to safely ease restrictions in future steps of the path forward plan.

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the racing industry has strictly kept approved protocols and has done everything possible to ensure a safe racing event and given that even with thorough testing they did not have a single case of COVID in the last year of fear, further given that Albertans would rather have a hand up than a handout and the best way we can do that is by letting them get back to business, to the minister: when will the Alberta Standardbred Horse Association be allowed to begin racing this year?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We obviously do want restrictions to be eased as quickly as possible while also preventing a future spike in cases, so we're listening to Albertans and businesses as well, who have clearly stated that they don't want to be in a yo-yo situation, as they put it. A gradual approach will mitigate that risk, and actions with the lowest relative risk are being considered for easing first. Racing centres are included in step 3 and step 4 of the path forward plan as a sector that may see restrictions eased. We must all keep following the public health guidance in reducing the spread to see our downward trend continue.

#### Taxi Driver Eligibility for Government Programs

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, cab drivers have been getting Albertans where they need to go throughout the entire pandemic. They have been getting people to grocery stores, to medical appointments, and all essential places we need to be. My office has received many phone calls and e-mails from cab drivers asking why this government deemed them essential but not critical enough to receive the critical worker benefit. They are frustrated that they are being left behind by this government. Will the minister tell these essential workers why they were left out of receiving this benefit?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've met with many small-business owners across this province as well as people who've been out there in the labour force. We thank people that have, you know, driven our cabs, driven Ubers, getting people around this province. We thank them for all the work that they've done. We've gone out there and listened as well. Many of them have set up sole proprietorships, and we've made sure that we've put in place provisions within our relaunch grant as well. If their business has been impacted, their revenue has been impacted, sole proprietors as well are able to apply for that type of relief.

2:30

**Mr. Deol:** Given that this government waited over 287 days to launch the program after the federal government announced the funding and given that most other provinces had their benefit program announced and money distributed before the second wave of the pandemic and given that cab drivers have been on the job every single day while this government dragged its feet on launching this benefit, will the minister explain to these cab drivers why it took so long to launch an ineffective benefit program?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, let's just provide this House a little bit of background on this program. It's going to be help for up to 300,000 eligible workers across Alberta, up to \$1,200 of support, to the tune of \$65 million. My understanding is that many cab drivers across this province are small-business owners. They're small-business owners in how they operate, and we're going to make sure that they're eligible for the relaunch grant. We'd encourage them if they want to google three words: biz, Alberta, and connect. There are details on there for small-business owners across Alberta.

**Mr. Deol:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government misled and confused taxi drivers, stating incomplete facts about sole proprietors' eligibility criteria for applying for the small- and medium-enterprise relaunch grant and given that the eligibility of being ordered to close due to the pandemic also prevented taxi drivers from receiving federal supports, will the minister explain to taxi drivers why he has blocked taxi drivers from multiple federal and provincial support avenues to make it through this pandemic?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, there's a commentary in there around misleading, and I don't think that that's what the member meant about this government and this House. But when it comes to the supports, we're going to continue to be there. We have our relaunch grant available until the end of March. I encourage all small-business owners across this province to apply that way. When it comes to the critical worker benefit, again, that's open to 300,000 eligible employees across this province in various industries. That's up to \$1,200 of support. Again, we're going to be there to support Albertans. We thank them for all their hard work in this pandemic. There's light at the end of the tunnel in this pandemic.

#### LGBTQ2S-plus Student Supports

**Member Irwin:** After weeks of concerns being expressed by those in the Red Deer LGBTQ2S-plus community, the Red Deer public school division's board of trustees announced it will not reconsider its decision to offer a diversity week instead of pride week. What message is being sent to Red Deer students when we won't recognize the unique challenges faced by sexually and gender-diverse youth? To the Minister of Education: will you stand up for Red Deer's LGBTQ2S-plus community and advocate for the importance of pride week in schools?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We value every student, and we value all their voices. The Red Deer public school division made a decision, and it would be best to ask the Red Deer public school division why they made that decision. We believe in local autonomy, so, again, Red Deer public has made this decision.

**Member Irwin:** The pattern is clear with this government and this minister in particular, including the cancelled working group committed to ending the disgusting practice of conversion therapy, dismantling legal protections for LGBTQ2S-plus students and school staff to form and join gay-straight alliances, and just last week we learned that this minister removed all references to safe and caring schools in her budget documents. Safe schools save lives, Minister. Look me in the eyes and tell me: why don't you think these kids matter?

**Member LaGrange:** That is categorically false. In fact, we have safe and caring schools, which are actually supported by school board policy. They all have to have welcoming, safe, and caring

school policies, antibullying policies. We are going to have some of the strongest protections in terms of antiracism content within our schools, and we also put in the Education Act the strongest legislation to protect our LGBTQ-plus students.

**Member Irwin:** We know that LGBTQ2S-plus students continue to experience discrimination and hate. We know that one of the most important elements of an effective curriculum is that students are able to see themselves in it. The NDP government was taking an evidence-based approach, building a curriculum grounded in multiple perspectives, with important references to gender identity and expression and an inclusive approach to sexual health. Will the minister commit to ensuring LGBTQ2S-plus perspectives aren't erased from her aggressive curriculum rewrite?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I cannot believe what comes out of the other side's mouths. In fact, our curriculum will have a broad and inclusive account of history, including black history and indigenous history. In terms of the ministerial order on student learning, which actually guides our curriculum that we've been building and which I look forward to putting forward very soon, is the very fact that every student will see themselves included and reflected in the curriculum. I can't wait to show it. I think everybody here will be very proud to see it.

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

#### **Tow Truck Driver Safety**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highways in Alberta can be dangerous and are prone to traffic accidents, especially during the winter months. Our government is committed to protecting Albertans' lives and livelihoods and therefore we must continue to show that we value them. On January 22, 2020, there was a fatal accident on highway 2, which involved a semitruck colliding with a tow truck. To the Minister of Transportation: what is being done to ensure further safety of tow truck workers?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. The worst part of my job is that I get notified every time there's a serious accident, death, or injury on the highways. Those are not good workdays for me, and I'd like to express tremendous sympathy for the family and friends of the truck driver. Highway maintenance workers, snowplows, police officers, all emergency workers deserve to get home safely. They deserve to be safe while on the side of the highway. That's why we've launched a review of the options to increase roadside safety, including lights set up to improve the visibility of workers and vehicles. We are working right now to examine tougher consequences for those that break the rules.

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that tow truck accidents are a year-round concern and given that Saskatchewan, our neighbours to the east, approved tow trucks using blue and amber lights in 2017 and death rates went down and further given that under Alberta traffic laws drivers are required to reduce speed to 60 kilometres an hour in the adjacent lane while passing emergency vehicles and tow trucks, Minister, when can we expect action to be taken on this very important issue?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like the hon. member and the whole House to know that we have already taken action. As of this winter Alberta Transportation has allowed highway maintenance vehicles, including tow truck drivers and others, to use a combination of flashing lights, strobe lights with their yellow lights to increase visibility while we look at this issue. Additionally, new signage is being installed on the highways, and a social media campaign was launched to remind Albertans to take weather conditions into consideration to keep roadside workers safe. We've also launched consultations with our highway maintenance partners to gauge drivers' awareness of roadside worker safety and tow truck companies.

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thanks, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that blue lights are typically associated with emergency vehicles and often a ticket and are inherently ingrained in people's minds to slow down and further given that tow truck drivers perform their job to the best of their ability in order to ensure that people get home safely, Minister, what is our government doing to further ensure that Alberta traffic laws are obeyed, particularly while passing tow trucks?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. As I said already, we've already allowed more flexibility for lights. Besides the yellow lights, white strobe lights are now being used. We are looking at further light and pattern combinations to help people see roadside workers and keep them safe. Everybody deserves to get home safely at the end of the day. Drivers travelling next to a stopped tow truck must slow down to 60 kilometres an hour, the speed limit. I have to tell you that last night on the way up here I slowed down to 60 twice, and people behind me were honking the horn, Mr. Speaker. Enforcement is going to be part of that, too.

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

#### **Federal Equalization and Transfer Payments**

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are honest, hard-working, and above all, they're fair. We also work hard to ensure that we treat our neighbours fairly, and all we ask in return is a fair deal. Fair treatment is the least that a citizen can expect from their government. Right now when it comes to federal equalization payments, Albertans are getting the short end of the stick from Ottawa. Would the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance update Albertans on how Alberta's government plans to get Albertans the fair deal that they deserve?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There certainly are problems with our federal fiscal transfer programs in this country. We were in fact profoundly disappointed with the recent federal decision to only increase the cap instead of removing the cap on our fiscal stabilization program. With respect to equalization the Premier has been clear. Albertans will have an opportunity to send a strong message to Ottawa with a referendum on equalization.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that our party won an overwhelming majority in 2019 on the promise of a referendum on equalization and given that nonrenewable resource revenues are currently included when calculating these transfers and further given that many provinces use this loophole and artificially lower their revenue reports, if Albertans tell us through this referendum to address this raw deal from Ottawa, how will the minister address this glaring oversight with his federal counterpart?

2:40

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

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2014 Albertans have made a net fiscal contribution to the rest of the nation through fiscal transfers through Ottawa of over a hundred billion dollars, and there are some significant problems with the equalization program. One of those is, in fact, that nonrenewable resource revenues are included in the calculation. We advocate that they should be excluded entirely from the calculation of equalization. We will not have a fair program until the methodology removes any disincentive for provinces to develop their own resources.

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

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister again for his answers. Given that Albertans asked for a fair deal when it comes to equalization and given that the federal government doesn't always respond as we would hope, can the same minister tell all constituents of Brooks-Medicine Hat, who are very concerned about this, what our province has been doing to ensure Alberta's economic future?

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

**Mr. Toews:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will be continuing to advocate for corrections in the equalization program and looking forward to the referendum on equalization. The other issue is that there is a floor mechanism in the equalization program that actually increases the equalization program while income disparity is narrow across the country. That is a problem that has to be corrected. We will advocate for that correction. On top of that, we're positioning this province to disproportionately attract investment in our economic recovery efforts that will lead to increased job creation and opportunities for Alberta businesses.

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

## Members' Statements

*(continued)*

### Hate Crimes against Black Muslim Women

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe that everyone has the right to feel safe in their communities. We, like the majority of Albertans, were horrified to hear about the recent attacks on black Muslim women at various transit stations in Edmonton, and I stand here today to remind the government that they have a duty to protect all of its constituents. The UCP must strongly condemn these violent hate crimes against black Muslim women and all crimes of hate and take bold steps to combat racism and racial biases that exist within the province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

One of the victims was doubly traumatized, once by the attack itself and again when an EPS member discouraged her from filing an official report on the attack. This is absolutely unacceptable. Every single Albertan needs to know and feel like they are protected by the law regardless of their ethnicity or religion. That is why we call upon the government of Alberta to establish a provincial hate crimes unit, to give this hate crimes unit the capacity to levy heavy fines for hate crimes committed, and to ensure that the record of the unit's enforcement and reports received is well documented and public.

Never again should a victim of a hate crime be discouraged from filing a report, but we cannot only focus on the justice system. The curriculum must be updated to include a variety of resources focused on antiracism to counter hate, discrimination, and Islamophobia that will help to eliminate or, at the very least, reduce hate-motivated crime and violence at the grassroots level. I call on all members of this Assembly to join me in reminding the government that racism and sexism have no place in Alberta and that we must be united in taking action to protect Muslim, racialized women.

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

### COVID-19 Response

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. While COVID should be respected, there is too much fear. Hope is so much better. Truth is an antidote to fear. Truth is a knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come. Perspective is integral to understanding truth. Relating to COVID, interpreting facts in isolation or with selective fact emphasis distorts perspective, allowing fears to take root. Providing facts in context with a balanced emphasis supports healthier perspectives.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The average age of death with COVID is 81, but the average age of death in Alberta is 82. They are virtually the same. Vaccinations are increasing for those deemed at higher risk. Any risks are abating. No child under 20 has died with COVID. Children should never be made to fear. Media hysteria and those seeking to leverage a narrative of fear are not serving the truth. While we should be vigilant, fear should not be used as a tool to coerce compliance to restrictions. Prospective approaches used by doctors for unhealthy individuals should not be used for healthy populations.

A principled vision of hope: trust Albertans to govern themselves and their families in respectful ways. Great leaders lead in love and inspire hope and the best in those they serve. Mr. Speaker, we can love truth and trust that it will prevail.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 52 Recall Act

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to seek leave of this Assembly to introduce first reading of Bill 52, the Recall Act.

Mr. Speaker, this act would allow Albertans to initiate a process that could lead to the removal and replacement of elected officials. This would apply to MLAs, municipal officials, and school trustees. This would allow Albertans to hold their elected officials



accountable throughout their term, not just at the ballot box. I hope members on both sides of the aisle will support this legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 52.

[Motion carried; Bill 52 read a first time]

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal annual report 2020.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and at 1:54 the Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Language Creating Disorder

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 1:54 the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation was responding to questions from the members of the Official Opposition. He was choosing to respond in a derogatory tone and with derogatory language. He continued to refer to our members educating themselves, which is disappointing but not unexpected or new. Under 23(j), however, “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder,” I felt I needed to call a point of order when he showed his complete lack of respect to someone else elected to this office when he referred to the member on our side as being slow. Calling someone stupid, using playground insults, talking to someone as being the slowest among the caucus: these are juvenile insults not becoming of this Chamber.

Not having the benefit of the Blues to confirm my understanding of the language, if I heard correctly, I would request that this member apologize and withdraw and consider other ways to make his point. While we disagree about the facts, that personal vitriol and heated debated are not necessary to make our points in this Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, when it comes to educating ourselves, I do encourage all members of the Chamber to educate themselves on the issues before they come to this place. That is our job, and I will point out to the Official Opposition House Leader that I think her constituents expect her to educate herself on issues when they come to this Chamber. There’s nothing derogatory about the minister saying that.

2:50

With that said, I had a brief moment to be able to speak to the minister during question period to ask what may or may not have happened during that exchange. I’m not aware of him referring to anybody in that manner that is being said by the Official Opposition House Leader. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues or a transcript here, so I’m going to have to refer to you to see if it is in the transcript.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate both of your interventions. I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I concur that if the hon. the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation had referred to the member as slow, it would be a point of order, but according to the Blues, his exact quote was, “I know he’s the sole,” as in being the only, “member of the capitalist caucus of the NDP over there, and you know what?” He went on to make some other comments. I don’t believe that the

hon. minister implied that the member was slow or anything of the nature. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

##### Bill 208

#### Alberta Investment Management Corporation Amendment Act, 2020

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, on March 11, 2021, the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills presented the report of the committee on Bill 208, Alberta Investment Management Corporation Amendment Act, 2020, and their request for concurrence of the Assembly on the report, which is to recommend that the bill not proceed. As a member other than the mover rose to speak on March 11, 2021, debate on the motion will proceed today. The motion to concur in the committee’s report on Bill 208 has already been moved, and I will therefore now recognize any additional members wishing to speak to the motion. I understand that I interrupted, but I believe I have the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to speak to the motion. The hon. member.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all of you. This is, of course, my first chance to debate in the week, and as I’ve made a tradition, I just would like to acknowledge that we’re now a year into the pandemic officially having been declared. We know it’s been incredibly challenging for so many folks, including folks in this very Chamber. You know, I think we should think about that and how we interact with each other, but I think, most importantly, we should reflect on the incredible work of our health care workers, essential workers, and front-line workers who have hit the year mark. I can’t imagine how incredibly trying that has been, so a shout-out to them if any of them are watching at this moment.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I guess it’s with mixed emotions that I’m standing on this concurrence debate because, you know, I’ve sat on the private members’ bills committee since it being struck and being appointed. It’s been incredibly frustrating how often this government refuses to support our bills, our private members’ bills, yet continues to support their own government’s bills. We all know that private members have very few legislative tools through which they can try to introduce a bill. We’ve tried. Many of the members of the committee on my side are here. Actually, we all are here in the Chamber. We’ve tried many times to reason with this government to allow bills to proceed. There have been countless bills that we’ve disagreed with the substance and the content of those bills, yet we’ve allowed them to proceed to the House.

**Mr. Schow:** Rodeo?

**Member Irwin:** Absolutely. I’m being heckled by Cardston-Siksika, and I hope he is willing to stand to this bill and talk about the very important issue of pensions, which I’ll be speaking about in a moment, as I frame my argument. Absolutely, that heckling member is correct in that there have been, I believe, two bills that we did not support the movement of to the House, but other than that, we’ve supported them all even when we disagreed with the content. We’ve not seen a similar approach from this government.

**An Hon. Member:** We’re not into rubber stamps. Nope.

**Member Irwin:** What I want to talk about today – again, I’m hearing some heckling over there. I’m hoping that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland will also talk about why he did not support a conversation on pensions to proceed to the Chamber. But, you know, we’re here to convince you otherwise today.

Let me talk a little about why this bill, Bill 208, was so – well, it’s one that’s close to my heart. I mean, I’ve spoken many times in this House about having been a teacher. I’m under no conflict because I don’t have a teacher’s pension, but I can tell you, having been a teacher and, you know, having worked in two different schools, I hear from teachers all the time and on this discussion of attacks on teachers’ pensions. I mean, don’t get me wrong; it’s on other public-sector pensions as well, which I’ll talk about in a moment. There has been a lot of feedback. There has been a lot of response. The members of the private members’ bill committee on our side of the House shared the fact that we’ve all been inundated by Albertans on the issue of pensions, and I think that we can fairly speculate that the government members have also heard from a whole heck of a lot of Albertans. In fact, we know because we are CCed often on e-mails and correspondence that is directed to those same MLAs.

It’s a couple of issues today that we want to talk about. My colleague the fantastic Member for Lethbridge-West put a lot of work into this private member’s bill, Bill 208. She is someone whose knowledge on this topic I respect deeply, and I know she’s dug into countless documents, in particular when it comes to AIMCo and AIMCo’s performance and when it comes to some of the other issues like the CPP, so I know that she consulted heavily on this, just as my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods has presented her own bill and her own work to try to respond to the grave concerns of Albertans around the attacks on their pensions.

It’s indisputable to this side of the House that Albertans’ pensions should be discussed in this Chamber. I’ve said before in this House, you know, that I’ve spent more of my life in rural Alberta than I have in urban Alberta, believe it or not, and when I talk to my conservative friends back in various parts of rural Alberta, they tell me that they have no idea where this government got the CPP idea from. I think about my dad, who’s somebody I’ve talked about, who’s pretty right wing, and that’s okay. We have respectful debates. But when someone like that is saying, “Get the heck away; get your hands off my CPP,” that’s a pretty good barometer for me.

You know, I can say that we’ve warned this government that you best stay away from hard-working Albertans’ pensions. You best keep your hands off. Albertans have worked hard like my dad and a whole lot of Albertans. My dad worked for nearly 40 years in the oil patch, in fact, and that money belongs to them.

In just, you know, the two years that this UCP government has been in office, we’ve seen a record of mismanagement. We’ve seen the AIMCo gamble that lost \$2 billion on the Premier’s gamble on that investment. So I think it’s pretty clear and I think Albertans are pretty right in their concerns that this Premier and this government should be nowhere near their pensions.

I want to talk a little bit about our last private members’ bill committee. We actually invited three stakeholders to talk about the importance of this bill and just why, you know, it’s so critical that it proceed to the Chamber and that we have a fulsome debate on this matter.

3:00

I want to chat a little bit specifically about the one stakeholder we had. His name is Mr. Greg Meeker. He’s actually a constituent of mine. Both he and his wife are proud teachers. In fact, Greg has a particular interest in this issue because not only is he a teacher – in fact, he’s a principal at Coronation school here in Edmonton – but he also spent 12 years on the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement

Fund Board. This guy is the pension guru. He knows all the specifics around AIMCo, around pension management. He knows things that I had to look up multiple times just to understand exactly what he was meaning. In fact, a lot of Albertans don’t know the level of intricacy someone like Greg Meeker has or folks who are connected to AIMCo, and they don’t need to, but they need to know that those pensions are going to be there for them when they retire. Given Greg’s history and his background, we knew that he would be, you know, an expert who could attest to the need for Bill 208.

I just want to touch on some of the points that he made. One of the things that he talked about was the issue around the AIMCo board. One of the provisions of Bill 208 is that it would see additional members appointed to the AIMCo board by its largest clients. He talks about the broader issue of board governance. He says that board governance is about oversight, accountability, and transparency. He says that in the last two years there have been two fundamental changes to the legal structure of AIMCo and the public-sector pension plans. He goes on to say that, you know, the governance structure of AIMCo has basically been – it’s overdue for an update. He says that having the pension plans, which make up roughly 80 per cent of AIMCo’s business, represented on AIMCo’s board draws a line of accountability from the plan members to AIMCo, a line that is required.

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to speak in concurrence with the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members’ Public Bills that Bill 208 not proceed. This bill proposes three major changes to the Alberta Investment Management Corporation. The first change would be to add public-sector members to the AIMCo board, increasing the size of AIMCo’s board from 11 to 15. Well, actually, across comparable jurisdictions, boards consist of between seven and 11 members, and more is, quite frankly, not always better. An increase of board members would likely be cumbersome, resulting in a less effective board and a decline of meaningful individual participation as well as increased board costs to taxpayers.

This change also seeks to remove competency requirements for board members. Competency requirements are in place to ensure that the assets are being managed wisely and in a secure manner. Change and adaptation are fundamental to any organization wanting to improve, and AIMCo is no exception, but this change would be detrimental and actually not improve AIMCo. Through well-founded change, AIMCo will continue to grow and serve Albertans well into the future.

Madam Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund I can shed some light on AIMCo’s success. The Alberta heritage savings trust fund is just one of the many accounts that AIMCo provides investment services for. Policy standard is for return on investments to be 8.6 per cent while, in fact, the fund’s 10-year return was 8.8 per cent. Despite the losses many accounts faced in 2020, AIMCo actually only lost a few percentage points while at the same time the MSCI world index fell by 34 per cent. Within six months AIMCo had recovered its previous values. A lot of noise for nothing, in my opinion. We’re looking here at a very stable and effective investment manager.

While change and adaptation are essential to becoming better, removing competency requirements for board members will not improve AIMCo’s successful management. Governance members should absolutely have broad competencies, not be selected because they have some specific agenda to agitate for. Competency requirements ensure that all AIMCo’s directors can effectively perform their duties. The AIMCo regulation requires that

individuals appointed to the board must have proven and demonstrable experience and expertise in investment management, finance, accounting or law or [at least] experience as an executive or a director in a senior publicly traded issuer.

The second change that this bill would require would be to require a referendum on whether AIMCo should be manager of Alberta's pension plan if Alberta sends notice to withdraw from the Canada pension plan. Madam Speaker, the intent behind this is honourable, but the amendment is redundant. The Premier has already publicly committed that there would be a referendum to decide whether Alberta should withdraw from the Canada pension plan and proceed with an Alberta pension plan. Yes, of course, there'll be a referendum.

The third change would remove the ability of Treasury Board to give directives to AIMCo. Madam Speaker, if this were an issue, then why didn't the NDP amend this while they were in government? The sponsor of this bill admitted during testimony that Bill 208 is addressing a problem that does not currently exist and never has existed. When asked to identify any instances of government directing investment at AIMCo, MLA Phillips said that there have not been instances . . .

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. deputy opposition leader.

#### Point of Order

##### Referring to a Member by Name

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very clearly, as you, I think, heard, the hon. member mentioned a member by name and would like to retract that, I hope.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, would you like to withdraw the name?

**Mr. Orr:** Oh, you're right. I withdraw and apologize. Sorry. I missed that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please proceed.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Orr:** The member said, "There have not been [any] instances, in my memory at least, which on some [subjects] is reasonably long, where government has used that investment directive." That comes from *Hansard*, Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills Committee, February 26. Madam Speaker, this amendment is pure political posturing by the opposition. It is nothing more than fearmongering, that our government is somehow interfering with AIMCo's day-to-day functionality, in an attempt to tarnish the reputation of AIMCo when, in fact, government has never ever done that, even by their own testimony.

Madam Speaker, all-party committees do the detail work of the legislative process. This committee has done its work by investigating the proposals of Bill 208 and has recommended to the Assembly that the bill not proceed, and I stand in concurrence with that advice and encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Wow. So much to say, so little time. Maybe I'll first quickly start with some of the remarks there around losing just a little bit and then gaining it back

in six months. Imagine how far we would have gotten ahead had we not lost the \$2 billion to begin with.

Then, as for the referendum and, you know, this promise and everything, I seem to remember the Premier promising to fund health care. He even signed his little name on a piece of cardboard. We know how that turned out, so maybe we should actually see a referendum put into law.

Madam Speaker, people work 30, 35, 40-plus years with the intention of seeing their pension there when they reach that and they decide to retire. People rightfully are worried when government starts to tell them what to do with their pension. That is the case. We've just heard: well, government is not going to do that. But the problem is that the language is in place that will allow them to do that. The government is able to direct AIMCo; AIMCo is able to forgo advice they're getting from their client members. So these people have a right to be worried.

Recently, of course, we had delivered to the Premier a considerable number of signatures, in the tens of thousands, around their pensions being moved. You know, it's interesting to see that the government is ignoring that. Just recently we saw the outrage with regard to coal policy and how the government backtracked. They said, "Well, Albertans spoke to us, and we heard them," yet you couldn't hear them when we delivered tens of thousands of petitions. A recent survey showed Albertans – well, maybe not so recent now – about people's thoughts on having their CPP moved to an Alberta pension plan, and a very clear majority said no. So I'm surprised. Yet again the government is ignoring us, because we've all heard over the past two years about how the UCP won with such a great big margin of voters and a clear message. A clear message.

**3:10**

Yet they're ignoring messages right in front of them, which brings me to my next point. During the committee where we discussed Bill 208 – and ultimately, of course, the committee said that it should not proceed, yet another opposition private member's bill that we're now having to fight just to try to argue about whether it's good or not. But during that committee meeting, I did read from a FOIP that the Official Opposition had obtained. Of course, earlier on my behalf somebody had tabled that FOIP here in the Assembly, but if I do need to table it again, Madam Speaker, just let me know. I'm happy to provide the copies for that.

In this FOIP – it was a briefing note to the minister about the negative reaction from Albertans on Bill 22; I'll just again briefly quote that – it states, "There was strong negative reaction to these changes [in Bill 22] from pension stakeholders." It then goes on to note: "AIMCo has since reported significant losses, which has fueled this . . . reaction." Going back to some of the original comments around, "Oh, we only lost a little bit, but now we've gained it back," the point was that you lost it on a strategy that didn't work. How much further ahead would these people be? It must be noted that it's rare for the bureaucracy to write such a pointed note to the minister. Also in that briefing note, its concluding section states, "The Minister's Office has received much correspondence on the Bill 22 changes, primarily negative and primarily focused on changes impacting the ATRF."

How much clearer does it have to be for the government to start listening on this important topic? That is why it's so important that Bill 208 get the opportunity to be debated in this House. We are talking about not only the impacts to hundreds of thousands of Alberta workers' pensions but ultimately potentially millions of Alberta pensions when they're moving. If you're going to promise to hold a referendum on that, then you shouldn't be afraid to put

that in legislation and actually be held to it. That is what Bill 208 proposes to do.

Now, if you're worried about, potentially, the size of the board, there are a couple of different options. First off, it's not unheard of, so you can get over that part. Second, the positions that the government appoints: you don't necessarily have to appoint all of them. You could leave those open for the largest clients to have their representative in there. At the very least, if the government exercises that ability to direct AIMCo and if AIMCo decides they're going to go in a different policy direction from what they're being told, those members have the voice on the committee and record to show that they were not in favour of it. These were the changes that we made: to allow them to direct what goes on. This whole thing about, "Well, we've got to have people that are qualified on it" – you heard very, very clearly from Greg Meeker that the matrix that's in place on how to be able to choose these candidates that represent them on the board is not some: well, put your name in a hat, and we'll pick it out. Come on. Let's use our heads a little bit here.

With all of these facts in place, petitions being delivered, the outcry that's being heard, you can't tell me that government-side MLAs and the government aren't hearing, because we're getting copied on it, so we know. A promise for a referendum is not good enough. We want to see it in writing. Put it in legislation. Should we see another situation where we're losing a bunch of money because of a strategy that turns out not to work because perhaps that strategy was overwritten by AIMCo while being directed by the government, at least then we see a recorded ability for those clients to disagree with the direction that's being taken. We should not put so many people's pensions at risk and ignore what we're all clearly hearing.

I'm hoping that members of this Assembly will look at this evidence – and that's exactly what it is; it's evidence – and vote to allow Bill 208 to at least be debated, at the very least. I guess that then you can all go home and say, "Well, we listened," at the very least. Then we get to see all the different points. We get to hear from everybody across the province through their MLAs, not just through the committee. Let's see Bill 208 debated here in the House, and at the very least we put some of these concerns aside so that people feel like their voices are being heard, because in not allowing this to proceed, you're shutting them down.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

**Ms Rosin:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I am actually excited to rise today and speak to Bill 208, which, of course, has to do with the governance and the structure of AIMCo, which is the investment body that manages all of the public-sector pensions in Alberta, people's livelihoods and their decades of work and their savings. This is an incredibly important topic for anyone who has been a public-sector worker and has a pension in the province.

The key things that this piece of legislation aims to do are to increase the board of directors of AIMCo from 11 members to 14, so an increase of four members, and the legislation also would remove the competency requirement for those board members. I'll preface what I'm going to say by saying that when I evaluate a piece of legislation and I decide whether to vote for or against it, if my ruling is that I'm going to vote against that piece of legislation, there are typically two reasons. The first reason would be a difference in ideology. I simply review the legislation, and I believe that it is not in line with what I believe to be in the best interest of our province. When I look at this suggestion to increase the number of board members from 11 to 15, to be honest, that goes against what I

believe in. I believe in smaller and limited government, not bigger government.

The other reason I would vote against a piece of legislation is when I deem it, to be blunt, to just be stupid public policy. To me, the suggestion that we should remove the competency requirement for the people who manage Alberta's \$119 billion investment fund is just bad policy, Madam Speaker. If you are a public-sector worker listening to this debate right now or hearing about this bill in the news, on your social media, you should be gravely concerned about this. If you have spent three or four or five decades in the public service saving up in your public-sector pension and you are now hearing that the fund, which is worth \$119 billion, could potentially have the competency requirement removed for who is governing and managing those investments and you are on the verge of retiring, that should scare you.

3:20

If we look at the past year and how the market has operated, we can see quite clearly just how volatile markets can be. It may be easy, sure, to have no competency requirements in a year that is going good, when the trajectory is straight uphill and there's no looking back, but, Madam Speaker, if the opposition thinks that an investment fund should never lose a dollar in its life, they're clearly mistaken. This is not how investments work. They go up, they come down, they go up, they come down, but eventually that trajectory should be uphill. If we just look at how the market has operated in the past year, we can see just how volatile markets can be.

A year ago we saw oil prices dip to negative values, nearly negative \$40 per barrel, and since then we've seen the market climb up, up, up, up, until suddenly Reddit got hold of it and pumped a company on the verge of going bankrupt to its highest level in history. If we just look at how volatile markets can be, we are clearly seeing why we need to have competent people managing these investments. If the average day-to-day investor, who isn't an expert, who doesn't have a background in financial management, were to manage their pension without any competency or any idea of what they're doing, they could lose everything, and that should terrify people who spent 30 years of their lives saving up.

I believe and our government believes, which is why I and, I believe, most of my colleagues today will be voting against this bill, that first and foremost people should be qualified for the job that they're doing, especially when that job is managing \$119 billion of other people's money. It is important that we have a competency requirement and that the people who are doing that are qualified for their job. If I look at what the regulations currently state within AIMCo, the regulation states that any board member must "have proven and demonstrable experience and expertise in investment management, finance, accounting or law or experience as an executive or a director in a senior publicly traded issuer."

**Mr. Schow:** The bill doesn't have that.

**Ms Rosin:** Well, I hope *Hansard* picked that up although I'm not sure.

Madam Speaker, to me, that regulation is important. That is exactly what we should have managing our investments. I would not want someone with no expertise managing my retirement fund. This is not to say that we should not have public-sector workers on the board of directors, by any stretch. To me, if there is a public-sector worker – or maybe it's four, as I believe the number is suggested to increase by – and if there were public-sector workers who have experience in, again, "investment management, finance, accounting or law or experience as . . . a director in a senior publicly traded" business, sure, that member would then be qualified to sit

on this board of directors. But to change the legislation, as this bill suggests, would be to suggest something as though saying that maybe TD Bank or CIBC or any of the major banks we have across North America should reserve a few seats on their board of directors for senior citizens over the age of 80 with not necessarily inexperience but that as they're the ones who'll be receiving a pension soon, we should give them a seat on their board of directors, too.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is not feasible, it doesn't make sense, and we need to have the most competent and qualified people managing investment funds of this size so that our public-sector workers who have worked decades and saved up their life savings can retire with a pension that has a solid return every year and does not lose money year after year due to the volatility of the markets, that people may not understand. I generally can't understand why anyone who has saved this long would want to invest their funds in a company that may not know what they're doing with their investment.

Madam Speaker, I also take strong issue with this fear-and-smear campaign that our opposition has put together, which is why this partisan legislation is sitting in front of us today. Our opposition has led this smear campaign on AIMCo, which has been a solid financial investor for years in Alberta, suggesting that these people are incapable of managing funds on their own and that somehow our government is stealing teachers' pensions. If we look at the results, last year AIMCo had a return on investment of 10.6 per cent year over year, and I would actually argue that for a public-sector pension fund, that is actually quite good, and with the volatility that we've seen in the market, I'd also be willing to bet that a lot of other people who may have pension funds through their work or who do their own investments might not have seen those kinds of returns over the past year.

At the same time, our opposition is saying that AIMCo is apparently incapable of managing money and should be more like the CPP. They say: well, the CPP does such a wonderful job. But the CPP's 10-year average is only 10.8 per cent, so only .2 per cent difference from AIMCo's investment returns last year. If we compare how these funds are operating, AIMCo is actually pulling its weight. They're doing a good job of managing public-sector pensions, and that's because they have qualified people at the helm on their board of directors.

It's interesting as well that our opposition talks about, you know, this threat that, Lord forbid, we put the CPP to a referendum and allow Albertans to vote on it and have their say as to whether they want to have a CPP or an Alberta pension plan. They say: well, the real threat is that if Albertans were to then have their pensions moved under AIMCo from the CPP, AIMCo could potentially be managing not just half of the Alberta's population's pensions but 4.2 million Alberta pensions because they'd be in charge of every single individual's retirement in this province. Madam Speaker, if that's the threat, that AIMCo could actually gain more users under a potential referendum on CPP, that should further reinforce to our opposition just why we need to have a competency requirement. If we're going to grow this fund from managing a few hundred thousand or a million members to managing the pensions of 4.2 million Albertans, I would surely hope there is a competency requirement. Maybe we should even strengthen it if we're going to go down that route and if Albertans are to vote to pull out, withdraw from the CPP and create an Alberta pension plan.

Madam Speaker, I take a lot of issue with these narratives that our opposition have said: that AIMCo is incapable, that we need to have unqualified people sitting on the board directing investments. The stock market is for the experienced. It's volatile. There are all kinds of different investments. I believe it was just last week or two

weeks ago now that we actually saw people shorting U.S. bonds. We are in dangerous waters, and we should have the most qualified people humanly possible managing the pensions of these public-sector workers and, as has been mentioned, possibly the investments of every Albertan if a referendum were to be successful in the future on a withdrawal from the CPP.

I, personally, will be voting against this piece of legislation. I think it's a terrible piece of public policy. I think that every Albertan who has a pension in Alberta should want to make sure that that pension is being managed with expertise and experience, and for those reasons I cannot vote for this piece of legislation.

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and join my voice to the debate before us this afternoon. Of course, I am a member of the private members' bills committee, so I was at that meeting and certainly know what went on. The MLA for Lethbridge-West gathered together much information to create this bill and certainly, like all MLAs in this Chamber, received much concern from Albertans about the legislation, that was passed last fall by the UCP government, legislation that was largely brought without any consultation with Albertans. Of course, you know, righting that wrong, which I think the UCP would want to do because it is very important that Albertans have a say – I think that that is something that all members of this Chamber value and know, that as representatives we must listen. We must listen to our constituents.

Sadly, in the fall, when this legislation came forward, the UCP did hardly any consultation, if any at all, and consequently Albertans were outraged. When people, you know, in the future retire from work after many years, they deserve to be able to have their pensions to rely on. They need to have some control and say in those pensions. When none of that was afforded to many different groups of folks, obviously there was outrage, and I think that that is so valid.

When this bill came forward – of course, the private members' bills committee members from the UCP knew that this was coming forward. This isn't secret. When that came forward, they had an opportunity to invite stakeholders to speak about their views on this. And you know what, Madam Speaker? They didn't invite anyone. They had no one to stand with them on this one. It was zero. They had no stakeholders on this. Nobody. So that really makes me question whether they really have anybody who wants to support this.

3:30

We, of course, had the maximum number that you're allowed, and we had representatives from the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta Federation of Labour, and the Alberta Fire Fighters Association. They represent hundreds of thousands of workers, but the UCP had no one – no one – to stand with them. I mean, I feel like that's just a missed opportunity for the UCP because if they were so certain of this legislation, then why would they not have at least one stakeholder, hopefully, representing a significant number of Albertans? But zero. There were zero of them there.

The legislation does three things that I think are valuable and important for Albertans. One, it has, you know, the bill from the fall, amalgamated four groups under the direction of AIMCo. They now no longer were in their own pension funds. They had to be administered under AIMCo. That was ATA, special forces pension plan, local authorities pension plan, and the public-sector pension plan. Those four: this bill by the Member for Lethbridge-West asked that there be representation of these, one representative from

each of these four groups as they were amalgamated into AIMCo. Absolutely, competency requirements would be fully respected, so this is just a red herring. What we hear from the government is that they are saying that there wouldn't be full competency. That's ridiculous. Of course they would. Of course, you know, this seemed to be a bridge too far for the committee members, and they didn't agree with that. They didn't think there should be more representation.

I mean, having a say in how your money is used, especially when it's taken away from you in the first place, I think is a fair way to make, I guess, reparations for sort of the very – I don't know – quite aggressive stance you've taken to just move it arbitrarily without anyone's sort of input into that. As has been said many times by other members certainly on this side of the House, you know, there is some question about AIMCo's leadership. AIMCo did lose \$2.1 billion last year, and the CEO, Kevin Uebelein, was fired. So if everything was okay, status quo, then how come he was fired? There's something wrong. They felt that that strategy, that VOLTS strategy that they had used, was too aggressive and too risky, but there was a significant issue. Heads rolled, and his, the CEO's, was one of them. Call me crazy, but I have some concerns about how much I can trust this organization, and certainly there are some issues around trust with this UCP government.

Another provision that this legislation gives is that it allows the government to give AIMCo investment directives. You know, the minister has spoken in the House, Treasury Board and Finance, saying: I'd never use that; I'd never use that; don't worry about that. Well, I don't know. Again, call me crazy, but I don't necessarily trust this government. They have shown repeatedly that they're not trustworthy, and I'll just give you a few examples.

Last spring, secretly, they opened up the contracts for the eastern slopes of the Rockies for coal mining. They defended political staff, a minister, and MLAs for international travel while the rest of us respected the orders of Alberta's chief medical officer. They eliminated the office of the Seniors Advocate and then appointed Janice Harrington, the CEO of the UCP, to be that advocate sort of amalgamated in there, meaning she had no expertise in seniors, no expertise in health. She was just a political appointee. I myself, like many Albertans, many constituents who have contacted me don't trust this government, and I think that those are some valid concerns that I've just presented. So when the minister says, "Don't worry; that provision isn't anything to, you know, get yourself concerned about because we won't use it," I question that because I've seen government time and time again, actually, not fulfill on ethics.

Then the third piece that this legislation has, which I think is fair, too, is to have a referendum on whether Albertans want to actually leave CPP, you know, have our own Alberta-branded kind of pension plan here. I mean, there's another bill that's just been introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs today that's about recall legislation, sort of giving more opportunities for Albertans to be able to recall members. Certainly, they talk quite a bit about that you want to create more opportunities to have democracy and more chance for people to have input and that that's a good example of that. Well, so is this. So is this.

Those are the three things that this legislation does that are important, and they're especially important because of the way this government has cavalierly ignored Albertans, and, you know, the fact that they did not have one stakeholder stand with them in that private members' bill committee really spoke volumes to me. It showed how little ground they really had to stand on.

I would say very clearly that this bill should be supported and it should be able to pass in this Legislature and that I would really, you know, caution the members because this isn't something that

just a very sort of esoteric small group of Albertans are concerned about; this is hundreds of thousands of workers in our province who are very upset, and they don't like the government sort of reaching in and making a decision.

I mean, I heard the member just before me from Banff-Kananaskis talk about how she believes in small government and, you know, sort of the principles of neoliberalism, I would say. Well, isn't this bill just a big example of a big government putting their hand in and saying, "This is what's going to be"? I mean, she should be standing up and railing against this. This is about government getting involved more and sort of going in.

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's wonderful to be in the Legislature serving Albertans. I would like to rise and speak in concurrence with the recommendation of the committee. I was also there when this bill was being deliberated.

One of the stakeholders that the NDP tendered to speak to Bill 208 was Gil McGowan. I listened carefully to what Gil McGowan said, and I'm just going to share some of the things that he said because I think it speaks to the veracity of this bill and supports the committee's recommendation that it shouldn't proceed.

One of the things that Gil said is that transitioning the teachers' pension investments to be managed by AIMCo was theft. Madam Speaker, that is a very serious allegation. Gil made these comments very lightly, but he didn't substantiate that, and I hope that the NDP, if they support and agree with what Gil is alleging, can stand and provide the legal basis for why Gil would make such an assertion. I think it's really important to be careful and responsible in the things that you say.

Gil also said that "taxpayers don't contribute to the plan." Madam Speaker, you know, I'm concerned that that reflects a profound disconnect and perhaps not a proper respect for the sacrifices that taxpayers make in supporting our public sector. We must always remember that without the businesses and the workers that they employ, there would be no money to pay for government and the services that we all value. To allege that taxpayers don't contribute to plans I find inaccurate and reflects, perhaps, an improper view or appreciation for the sacrifices of taxpayers. Taxpayers, through government, currently pay for about half of the contributions to public-sector pensions.

**3:40**

It's important to note that taxpayers actually bailed out the teachers' portion of an unfunded liability for their pensions in 1992 to the amount of \$2.1 billion. This was an amount that teachers had in a deficiency for their contributions to their own pensions. Government, via the taxpayer, has assumed the liability to fund that \$2.1 billion amount. Taxpayers actually contribute to more than 50 per cent of the cost of the pension assets. It's really important that we appreciate and understand the sacrifice. The reason for the transition of the pension management to AIMCo is to save both taxpayers and teachers an estimated \$40 million annually in respect of pension administration costs. So I'm really concerned when I hear that taxpayers don't contribute to pensions. We need to be respectful of all Albertans, the great services that our teachers and other public service providers provide but as well the taxpayers, who ultimately – without them there would be no money to pay for government.

Gil also said that leaving the CPP would be "a negative and destabilizing decision." Madam Speaker, whether or not the government recommends to proceed with offering Albertans the

option to decide on that question is still in process, but on a preliminary basis there is great opportunity for Albertans considering transitioning to an Alberta pension plan. Studies indicate that with a younger population with higher incomes, Alberta businesses and workers provide a \$3 billion annual subsidy to Ottawa in respect of CPP contributions. Layer on top of that a federal government that is bent on dramatically increasing payroll taxes for CPP, exasperating that annual subsidy from Alberta businesses and workers.

An Alberta pension plan has an opportunity to provide the same benefits that Alberta businesses and workers and retirees receive under the CPP but perhaps could provide us with an opportunity to have a game-changing competitive advantage by being able to leverage off our higher incomes and our younger population to provide lower CPP contribution rates under an Alberta pension plan, providing the same benefits but incentivizing employment and enhancing the Alberta competitive advantage, leaving more money in the hands of businesses and Alberta employees that work so hard to support their families in those businesses and, along with that, moving jobs out of Ottawa to Alberta. There are too many jobs outside of Alberta that Alberta disproportionately funds. An Alberta pension plan provides the opportunity to repatriate some of those jobs and opportunities to Alberta families and individuals. It's an exciting opportunity to consider.

One thing that Bill 208 proposes is that there should be a referendum on the investment manager – think about this – on something that the NDP disagrees with in the first instance. You know, Madam Speaker, that does strike me somewhat as disingenuous. When Gil spoke and some of the members opposite – they speak disparagingly of AIMCo.

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). I believe the member opposite has just imputed false or unavowed motives to members of the opposition. He said that members of the opposition spoke disparagingly of AIMCo, and I believe that that is abusive or insulting language that insults what members have said and is simply untrue. I think it certainly makes allegations against what members have said today and previously in the committee. I'd ask that you find that this be a point of order and that the member withdraw those comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I would submit that what the deputy House leader from the opposition was just describing was a matter of debate. I will acknowledge that there is precedent that if the member speaking had pointed to an individual member of the other side and said that they think this or think that, then that could be at least considered and weighed on your behalf, even though it's a matter of debate, on whether it's a point of order. But, in fact, even within the allegation that the deputy House leader said, he said that the NDP side feels this way. That's a matter of debate commonly accepted here and that has been argued a hundred times. Respectfully, though you get to make the decision this time, the result pretty much always is that it's not a point of order. It might have been if it was directed about a member, but it was directed towards the other side.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I would tend to agree with the Deputy Government House Leader on this matter. We would return back to debate, but the clock now strikes 3:47.

#### Debate Continued

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will ask that the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills close debate. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** How much time do I have, Madam Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Five minutes.

**Mr. Schow:** Five minutes? Oh. Excellent.

What a surprise. I get a chance to rise and speak on this. I am honoured to have an opportunity to engage in this conversation . . . [interjections] I can already hear the members opposite heckling me, as they accused members on this side of doing to them. I guess it cuts both ways.

I feel almost inadequate to speak on this compared to the hon. Member for Red Deer-South and his eloquent remarks and how direct and convincing he was, particularly when referring to Gil McGowan and his presentation before the private bills committee. I would also go so far as to say that it's a bit hypocritical for members of that side to argue that we didn't bring in stakeholders in that committee when we've just introduced two bills from the government side that also did not have any stakeholders brought forth from their side. You know, it would be a bit hypocritical, but that would be par for the course.

I think the other part of this . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let's let the hon. member close debate. Please continue.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that, and I do appreciate order in this House as much as you do.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, not quite as much.

**Mr. Schow:** What's that? Sorry?

**Mr. McIver:** Not quite as much.

**Mr. Schow:** Not quite as much.

I also want to commend the opposition member who spoke originally. I forget the constituency they represent.

**An Hon. Member:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Schow:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Though we disagree fundamentally on a lot of principles, I have a tremendous amount of respect for what that member says in this Chamber, and she did bring forth eloquent arguments. I do disagree, though.

I disagree on a couple of fronts, the first of which is the idea of liability on these pensions. When I hear stakeholders come in or members opposite or I hear ATA members come in and talk about this pension, they say that it's their pension, and it is. These teachers have worked tirelessly through their entire career educating Albertans, preparing them for the next phases of life and doing an incredible job of it. They pay honestly and diligently every month into their pension. So does the public, Madam Speaker. In the event that there is a shortfall for a defined-benefit pension, it is the public, the government, who makes up that shortfall.

3:50

While Mr. McGowan is grossly mistaken that the public does not pay for these pensions, governments tax the public. It is their money, that they have entrusted with this government to do appropriate things with, one of which is to ensure that the pension is entirely funded properly so that when these teachers, who work so hard to educate Albertans, retire, they can have a sense of security that their pension is not going anywhere but to them, when they've earned it. But the reality, Madam Speaker, is that as a government we have a responsibility to Albertans to ensure that these pensions that we contribute their money to are managed appropriately. Removing – removing, my friends – the competency requirement to manage this pension is nothing short of absurd.

Every single member in this Chamber brings unique characteristics and skills to the job that they have here, but we all earned our place in this Chamber regardless of side, regardless of where you represent. You earned that place because you were competent, because you were competent enough to be here. We told the public our vision for this province, and they believed it. That is why we were elected to this Chamber, because they felt we were competent. If they did not think we were competent as members, we would not be occupying a seat in this Chamber. The AIMCo board is no different. Managing billions of dollars without a competency requirement is absurd, Madam Speaker.

The private bills committee has recommended that this bill not proceed. I'm glad to see that we're having this debate today, because the last time the option to have this debate on concurrence was brought forward on a bill regarding pensions in this province, brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, we didn't have this debate.

**An Hon. Member:** I wonder why.

**Mr. Schow:** Because the members opposite decided it wasn't important enough to have this debate. But now the conversation is happening. I'm grateful for it.

As I close debate, I encourage all members to vote in favour of the committee's recommendation to not proceed with this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills has requested concurrence in the report on Bill 208, the Alberta Investment Management Corporation Amendment Act, 2020. Does the Assembly concur in this report?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for concurrence carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:52 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Getson	McIver	Sawhney
Glasgo	Orr	Schow
Glubish	Pon	Singh
Goodridge	Reid	Stephan
Guthrie	Rosin	Turton
Hunter	Rowswell	Walker
LaGrange	Rutherford	Yao
Luan		

Against the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Irwin	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Totals:	For – 22	Against – 6

[Motion for concurrence carried]

#### 4:10      **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 subamendment SA1. Are there any members wishing to speak for the final remaining minutes? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise one more time to further state my support for this subamendment and to discuss Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. Let me first express my appreciation to all my colleagues for their support of this bill and the subamendment. The support I have received is overwhelming.

I had the honour of creating this private member's bill with the intent that we Albertans set aside one month a year to reflect on the world's past atrocities. When I drafted Bill 205, I was deeply affected by the difficulty of genocide survivors and their fight for acknowledgement. Madam Chair, recognition is part of education. Recently our government has made great progress in recognizing the events of the past and the present. I would like to take this time to shine a light on the reasons this bill must be inclusive and relevant in our ever-changing times.

Though some people have tried to deny it, these atrocities occurred and still have effects on many individuals today. Sadly, the memory of events like the Holodomor and the Holocaust is fading. For example, multiple surveys completed in recent years by the Claims Conference have indicated that a concerning number of people in Canada and the United States have very little knowledge about the Holocaust. Relatively few millennials are aware that 6 million Jews were killed during this period. I'm certain that those with me in the House today will agree that this is unacceptable. I talk about what happened during these dark years because if we don't talk about the past, we will forget it and our children will never know about it. If we take this time to remember what happened every year, we show respect to the survivors of the crimes and their descendants.

Madam Chair, my bill seeks to set aside one month a year to allow us to promote knowledge and understanding. To do this, we would honour April as genocide remembrance, condemnation, and prevention month. Bill 205 also seeks to prevent acts of genocide by encouraging the government to develop strategies to combat the causes of genocide.

There are many more examples of genocide occurring over the years. For example, in a statement in 2019 the Premier recognized the victims of the Cambodian genocide, an atrocity perpetrated in the '70s, which led to over a million dead. Another example is the ongoing persecution in China against the Uighur Muslims. This is an issue I must expound on to explain why the amendment brought forward by ...



**The Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) all questions must now be put on subamendment SA1, as moved by the hon. Member for Peace River.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 carried]

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The remaining clauses of Bill 205 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Mr. McIver:** I move that we rise and report Bill 205, please.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: 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. So carried.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this point I rise to ask unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed to immediate consideration of third reading of Bill 205.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**Mr. Williams:** Who votes for genocide?

**Mr. Dang:** Point of order.

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

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. member opposite just heckled, "Who votes for genocide?" I believe that is clearly imputing a false motive under 23(h), (i), and (j).

**Mr. Williams:** I happily withdraw my statement and apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We'll consider the matter so dealt with.

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

#### Bill 206

#### Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

[Debate adjourned November 23: Mr. Williams speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join debate on second reading of Bill 206? The hon Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 206, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, and that is sponsored by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Before I proceed to my comments about this particular piece of legislation, I would just like to once again note how truly lopsided – if you look back at the record, the number of private members' bills that have actually made it to this place for appropriate debate, discussion, and consideration has been really pretty shameful and really skewed to one side. As we suspected when the government members used their majority to change the rules about how pieces of legislation are debated, we certainly anticipated that this would be the end result. Lo and behold, it is.

Anyway, we're going to talk about Bill 206, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act. Obviously, we support the rights of landowners. I think that's pretty straightforward, and that's pretty clear. We're also pleased to see this bill address adverse possession.

Now, again, going back along the same lines as my earlier comments, we are disappointed that committee members were not given a technical briefing. That certainly is in keeping with a lot of the other behaviours and choices that we see from government members, that transparency continues to be diminished in all places. In everything that we do, there is less information, there is less opportunity for debate and discussion and answering of true questions, not just listening to spin but actually getting to speak to people that can provide some clarity and some insight.

4:20

Madam Speaker, I think sometimes the members opposite forget the fact that we're all sent here for the same reason, to represent the people that voted for us. You know, we may not all agree, but it's our right to have as much information as possible so that when we do vote on a piece of legislation, it is an informed vote. It's not just a vote that has only listened to rhetoric or spin from one side. Anyway, that is incredibly disappointing, that committee members were not given a technical briefing and an opportunity to really ask technical questions – hence, the term "technical briefing" – and that the bill sponsor, particularly disappointing, could not answer components of what the bill does.

Now, earlier today I was told by one of my colleagues – I actually didn't realize this. I was going to reference that the Alberta Law Reform Institute had written a report about abolishing adverse land possession, and the member, one of my colleagues, mentioned to me that this was actually, I guess, an organization, a group, that did receive a significant cut in funding thanks to the government. Once again you see that it sort of goes full circle, that not only do they not give us the information or the opportunity to ask the questions that we need, but then they also reduce the capacity of different arms to fully dive into a topic and provide insight, and that has been reduced. Certainly, I hope throughout debate, you know, whether that's today or another day, that the member who is the sponsor for this particular bill will have an opportunity to actually answer questions.

The members on this side in the previous Legislature on the Resource Stewardship Committee were also in favour of this type of legislation and wanted to see it done. Now, obviously, there were some issues. Albertans with land disputes should be able to access the courts so that matters can be dealt with appropriately and in a timely fashion. We believe the changes in this bill are significant, and we think they should be done properly. It's our hope that the ministers involved with the changes in this bill have consulted

closely. Now, I underline the word “hope” because that has not been this government’s track record, to consult. Frequently, they consult after the fact and only with a select group, so it would be nice – it would be wonderful, actually – to see them take a new approach.

The original sponsor of the bill, I would like to point out, could not answer questions of the committee on statutory consent. We know this affects feedlots, but the member did not or would not – I’m not sure – expand on what other types of rights, facilities, and operations are affected. So I’m certainly hoping that the member, given the opportunity, will answer those questions. We’re also hoping that government members are able to provide a little bit more clarity today.

Now, there is some concern around conflict of interest with this bill. I know that we have talked about this before, what those concerns are. The government doesn’t seem too concerned with that. They’ve not taken steps to act on those concerns, so I will highlight them once again. When asked by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview about a potential conflict of interest, the sponsor of this bill, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, did not seem too concerned, and the UCP members tried to stop questions from being asked. Again, Madam Speaker, this is what we’ve come to expect from this government.

**Ms Glasgo:** Point of order.

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

#### Point of Order Items Previously Decided

**Ms Glasgo:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I don’t have the copy of the Standing Orders in front of me, but the hon. member is debating a matter that has already been decided by the House. The bill’s sponsorship has changed; therefore, her whole line of reasoning is completely – it’s moot. You can’t be arguing something that has already been decided by the Assembly. Without the standing orders in front of me, I know that is a standing order. It’s worth noting that the members opposite actually provided unanimous consent in order to make this happen.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe the member opposite has failed to provide a reference to a standing order. However, I understand that there is wide latitude often offered to members in this place and that we are debating the merits of a bill and the merits of presenting this bill. I would hope that you would give some guidance on this, and then we can move forward.

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

**Mr. McIver:** I will be as brief as I can to assist what my hon. colleague would have said, I believe, had she had her book in front of her. This is 23(c), “raises matters that have been decided during the current session.”

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I think we best proceed with caution here. As we move forward, let’s stick to the matter at hand, which is Bill 206.

The hon. Member for St. Albert has the floor.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My mistake, actually. It is true that the sponsorship changed, and it was by unanimous

consent. So I’m not going to retract, but I might just alter it a little bit. I think they did recognize that there were some issues.

Anyway, carrying on. The ramifications of this bill are significant. I think it’s important to go back and summarize the three main things that this piece of legislation does. The first thing is that it introduces property rights into the Bill of Rights. It also gives access to damages for loss of property and damages, or money ordered by the court, to be paid to someone as a remedy for loss of property. Actually, there are four.

Third, it removes adverse possession from property law in Alberta. Adverse possession, also known as squatters’ rights, is a legal method through which a person can gain title or ownership of property through extended use of the property. Now, the time required to occupy the land to gain title is 10 years, so a successful claim of adverse possession requires physical occupation of the property, and the occupation must be exclusive, open, notorious, and continuous. These are matters of concern for many rural landowners, no doubt, with large quantities of land because there are many areas which can be disputed.

The act certainly touches on a number of pieces of legislation. I think there are about four.

This gets me to some of the questions that I have for the members opposite. Perhaps the old and new sponsor of this bill will provide some insight for this Chamber. Some of the questions that I have for the government are: what effect will this bill have on occupiers with a potential claim of adverse possession? Also, what effect will this bill have on pending claims of adverse possession? What remedies will be available for an occupier who has made improvements to the property? What are the orders to which this applies? Really, I think that we use this question frequently in this place: what problems does this piece of legislation solve? What specifically, I guess, does the government hope to prevent and then solve in terms of existing ones?

Now, I think back to 2017, when we had a similar conversation about property rights, and actually that was a private member’s bill as well. I’m trying to think back to that date. That was another member, and I won’t say his name. But this was voted down, actually, by our government and for some very good reasons. We believed that a review should be conducted and that this bill could be better done with the assistance of departments. We also at the time had trouble or concerns with the drafting of that bill and, after the fact, did a comprehensive stakeholder engagement on this, which led to a report done by the Alberta Law Reform Institute, strangely enough, the same institute that received a significant budget cut.

Again, I’m not going to go back and talk about where some of the controversy on land rights that came into play years ago and that was under the previous . . .

4:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak in support of Bill 206, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. Before I get into what I want to discuss, just as a point of clarity for the record, while initially Bill 206 was sponsored by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, it is now being sponsored by my good friend the hard-working MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat, and I just want to extend my personal thanks to her for her hard work on continuing to support this bill.

I stand today to support the property rights amendment act, Bill 206, because property rights are important to the people of my

constituency, Livingstone-Macleod. If you were to stop any of them on the street and ask them, they would tell you how important property rights are to them and to any rural Albertan. Farmers and ranchers are the lifeblood of the economy in my riding and in this province, and the rights they have to their property are integral to their success and their entrepreneurial spirit to succeed.

But it's not just for farmers and ranchers. In order for entrepreneurs of all kinds to succeed, there must be strong property rights and fair rules regarding the government's expropriation of land and property. While there are instances in which the government may have to expropriate land for the development of roads, utilities, or other essential infrastructure projects, we must ensure that those landowners that are affected are fairly compensated and have the ability to challenge any expropriation decision. Property rights are the bedrock of any free and democratic nation, and government overreach into property rights eventually leads to an erosion of personal liberties. Even well-intentioned bills that are important for some Albertans, such as the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, have had unintended consequences for landowners, and I will speak on that later.

I am proud of our government's commitment and actions in reducing government overreach by reducing red tape and cutting taxes for Albertans. Bill 206, the property rights amendment act, is a great piece of legislation that will help continue down this path and will help protect the property rights of Alberta landowners. Bill 206 will entitle farmers, ranchers, and other landowners to receive fair compensation when land is expropriated. This compensation will not only cover their bottom line but will also include enough compensation so that it can be used by the landowner to expand their land or operations elsewhere, which can help make up for the land expropriated. Bill 206 will also remove the ability of the government to prevent challenges to expropriation, which, in essence, restores due process to Alberta landowners.

This bill, if passed, will not only strengthen property rights for landowners across the province but will also attract investors and investments from all corners of the world. Investors like certainty, and if they wish to invest in land for business opportunities such as agrifood production or manufacturing, they will feel more certain that their investment is secure under this bill.

This will benefit the local economies of communities across rural Alberta and especially communities in my riding of Livingstone-Macleod. Livingstone-Macleod is a riding dominated by agriculture and agrifood. The farmland and grazing land here is of highest quality, and its value has contributed to the economic growth of Alberta for years, even when other industries have suffered recently. Agriculture is an industry that continues to prosper and to innovate even in the face of punitive federal carbon taxes, that continue to add more costs to farmers. We can see this prosperity by the continued growth of the agrifood industry year after year, which is not only great for Livingstone-Macleod but for the entire province and for the nation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

As we work to diversify our province's economy and revenue sources, agriculture plays a key role in that. In fact, a recent survey completed by Agriculture and Agrifood Canada forecasted that in 2020 net cash income for Canadian farms grew by 21.8 per cent, average farm family income increased by 8.6 per cent, and agricultural exports increased from \$67 billion in 2019 to nearly \$74 billion last year. Although that data is about the agricultural industry throughout Canada, we can see that Alberta agriculture was particularly strong last year, with above average yields and higher prices for commodities, which led to a 13 per cent increase

in farm cash receipts within Alberta in the third quarter of 2020 compared to the same period the prior year.

The recent provincial-federal investment announcement for our irrigation districts and the private-sector investments in agriculture and agrifood facilities across the province show that agriculture continues to have a bright future in Alberta, and Bill 206 will assist the industry even further as it will provide more certainty to farmers and investors.

The residents of Livingstone-Macleod and other rural ridings stand to gain the most from this bill because it establishes more government accountability for infrastructure projects involving expropriation. No farmer should be worse off or suffer burdens because of their farm being a spot that the government has decided is best for a highway or infrastructure project. Under this bill the farmers impacted will receive better, fairer compensation that goes beyond covering just the bottom line.

I'm happy to see that there is even a level of bipartisan support for this bill, or at least I believe there is bipartisan support for the objectives that this bill is trying to achieve. Brian Mason, the former Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and Transportation minister under the previous NDP government, talked about the unintended negative impact that the Alberta Land Stewardship Act caused to property owners, which leads me to my comments about the Alberta Land Stewardship Act.

For the most part, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act is a great piece of legislation. My riding of Livingstone-Macleod is under the South Saskatchewan regional plan. That is only one of two fully established plans within the province so far. The South Saskatchewan regional plan is an important plan for Livingstone-Macleod because it balances the needs of the economy, the communities, and our environment. Many stakeholders and community members were consulted before the plan was established, and it has been positively received by the vast majority of my constituents of various political persuasions. That is important, especially in a region that has to be careful and cautious in our water usage and intentional in our conservation. But the Alberta Land Stewardship Act did make it easier for government to expropriate land in order to get infrastructure projects done in a quick and efficient manner. While that is important, it's unacceptable to have hard-working farmers, ranchers, and other landowners bear the brunt of the costs.

The residents of Livingstone-Macleod and residents across Alberta deserve to have certainty in their rights to their property, and that's why I'm happy to stand today to support the changes that Bill 206 makes. I encourage everyone in the House to vote in favour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 206, brought forward, as clarified, by the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. It is, I think, always a benefit to this Assembly when we have the opportunity to have fulsome debates around private members' bills. As has been mentioned by a number of my colleagues throughout this afternoon, private members' motions and bills are one of the few opportunities that a private member has to bring something before this Legislature. As a private member myself I know I look forward to the opportunity to bring forward a private member's bill or a motion at some point, and when that opportunity arises, it is the duty of this House, I believe, to give it a fulsome debate.

I can't help but also share my disappointment and frustration as a private member seeing the number of private members' bills,

which is to date all of them, that have been prevented by the majority of the government members from even coming before this House for debate. We have seen numerous private members' bills basically die in committee, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, because every single time a member of the opposition has brought forward a private member's bill, it has been blocked at the committee level. While we might have an hour-long debate at most on concurrence, we don't get to have a fulsome debate.

We say this, Mr. Speaker, as well as members who are aware, that we are likely on a private member's bill – while, of course, members will vote as they see fit, it is unlikely that private members' bills brought forward by the opposition would pass in a Legislature with the majority that the government has. Yet it is still important to have that debate. For some reason the government members of this House are terrified or do not want to have debates on private members' bills brought forward by the opposition. To date only one private member's bill by a government member has failed to pass committee, and that's only because that member knew his bill was so flawed that he actually tried to amend it within committee.

In any event, I do think it's important that we have fulsome discussion and debate around private members' bills, and I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 206, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. I do think it's one – the Member for St. Albert mentioned it – that we are generally very supportive of. The idea of supporting landowners' rights and property rights is deeply important to all Albertans, and certainly we want to make sure that those rights are protected.

I see that private member's Bill 206 does bring forward amendments to the Bill of Rights around property rights to make sure that when land or property held by a private citizen is expropriated by government, there is full and fair and timely compensation and that there's a process by which those appeals can be heard. I understand that this is an amendment to the Bill of Rights to add that provision. I do want to highlight, of course, that we do have legislation already in place in Alberta that deals with expropriation. The Expropriation Act by definition deals with that and sets out processes. But to affirm it within the Bill of Rights, I believe, is a bit more symbolic than it is actually substantive because we have several pieces of legislation that deal with it in detail. You know, the symbolism: I can appreciate that it's important to many Albertans.

**4:40**

With respect to a couple of the other provisions of Bill 206, I want to speak a little bit about the changes that it makes to a number of pieces of legislation around adverse possession. As my colleague the Member for St. Albert mentioned, you know, adverse possession is often called squatters' rights. That's sort of how it's understood, but it's really not always the most accurate reflection of what we're talking about when we're speaking about adverse possession. It's often, if I may give an example, Mr. Speaker, the idea of two property owners who might have abutting pieces of land. There may be a piece or a section in the middle – for example, there could be some farmland, there could be a woodlot in the middle that spans both pieces of property – and one of those property owners might be using a portion of that shared area. The notion of adverse possession would say that over time, if that use of that shared piece of land is – there are a number of criteria that need to be met. It would be considered that landowner's property even if it technically, within the land title system, would fall within the other property owner's rights and land title. The idea is that over time that person basically has ownership over it by use of it.

Now, as I mentioned, there are criteria that have to exist in order for adverse possession to be in place, and those are that the use of that land, even though that person might not have technical ownership over that piece of land, must be open, meaning that it's not hidden. It's not being done, you know, subversively; it's actually being quite openly done. It is exclusive, meaning that that person is the only one using it. It's notorious and continuous, meaning that the use of that land is ongoing. It's not just a one-time thing; it's going on all the time. Those are the principles behind adverse possession, and in Alberta the law to date has been that that person has to have used that property for 10 years before it's considered that they may have a claim of adverse possession.

Now, there are other jurisdictions that also have adverse possession laws in place, I believe – Nova Scotia, Ontario, New Brunswick – but there has been general consensus that the idea of adverse possession is inconsistent with the ideas around land titles. We have a very comprehensive land titles system within Alberta. Many jurisdictions have comprehensive land titles systems, and the idea of adverse possession is really somewhat outdated. It's something that I believe even before this Legislature and before the Resource Stewardship Committee – when the NDP were in government as well, it was consistently somewhat believed that that piece of legislation or adverse possession should be struck off the legislation. I believe that what has been brought forward in Bill 206 is consistent with that.

Now, the Member for St. Albert mentioned that a comprehensive report was done by the Alberta Law Reform Institute, which, I have to admit, I browsed a bit to refresh my memory a little bit on the law around adverse possession, something I haven't really turned my mind to much since I was in law school many years ago. I did refresh my memory a little bit on that and read or skimmed that report, and it does seem that what is in Bill 206 may be consistent with many if not all – it's difficult to see if all the recommendations from that report have been incorporated into Bill 206. I think that's part of our question. I think that from the opposition side – and I won't speak for all of my colleagues; they'll certainly have an opportunity to do that – while we appreciate what's behind this bill and the intent behind it and the changes that it's proposing, we were seeking clarification, I understand, when we were in committee, simply because this is a somewhat complex area of law, and we want to make sure that the changes that are being proposed in Bill 206 are consistent with what has been recommended.

It touches on a number of different pieces of legislation. It touches on the Limitations Act. It touches on, as I mentioned, the Bill of Rights. It also touches on the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, the Land Titles Act, and the Responsible Energy Development Act. I simply want to ask the questions – I believe the Member for St. Albert asked about them – but when there's no opportunity for a technical briefing during the private members' bills committee, it's difficult to know how much the content of the bill aligns with what those who are experts in the ministries would recommend. We know that private members' bills are not drafted with the assistance of government ministries because they are private members' bills. So that input would have been I think helpful to clarify some of the questions to ensure that what we're seeing in Bill 206 reflects, I guess, the best and most current state of opinion on how the law should be amended to achieve the objectives set out in the bill.

I think, you know, the questions that we have been asking around that issue of what would be the impact on potential claims of adverse possession in the future, I believe that might have been addressed within Bill 206. What about pending claims? Of course, when we're talking about adverse possession going back 10 years, there are many claims that are still in the process of being dealt with. I would just hope that the mover of the bill could clarify her

understanding or position with respect to how those past and ongoing claims will be addressed given the changes that are proposed and the remedies that will be available for an occupier who has made improvements to the property. These are all the kinds of things that we just want clarification from the members on as to the fact that this is the most comprehensive way for this bill to achieve its objectives.

Overall, I want to, you know, indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I do believe that there is some general support from most members – and I would look forward to hearing other members speak – around the idea of protecting property rights, around abolishing adverse possession as it's been in legislation for some time but wanting to make sure that it is as clear as possible that what this bill achieves is absolutely clear in law because there are some grey areas. We want to make sure it's done right, and I think that that's where we can have the benefit of ministries. I do hope that if this bill does pass, there'll be significant work done with the affected ministries to make sure that it can be implemented properly to achieve its objectives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour to be able to stand today and support Bill 206, the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. The ideas around this bill: I remember probably being explained the importance of this for the very first time in around 2008, when I was a university student. It was right around the time that former Premier Ed Stelmach actually was bringing forward this bill, and it was actually a topic that was being discussed while I was in university. As someone that grew up in a city, Fort McMurray, it wasn't something that necessarily had ever been top of mind to me growing up because there aren't farmers in my neck of the woods. We pass by a lot of farms out on the highway up, but there aren't any farms for a couple of hundred kilometres.

I remember listening to this and doing quite a bit of research at the time and really realizing that this was with my values, that protecting property rights was just as important for someone that lives in a city or a town as it is for a farmer, a property owner, or an investor. This is an important piece of protection for all Albertans. As the MLA for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche I know just how incredibly important these property rights are to all Albertans that I represent and to all Albertans all across this province. It's interesting because I remember, when I was doing some research on this bill, thinking about, "Well, I don't know how much this has really ever affected my life," but I drive along highway 63 on a regular basis, and when they went to twin highway 63, I do understand that there were some pieces of property that had to be acquired from different landowners because the proposed highway went through some of those lands.

This process greatly impacts all Albertans, so having this clarified, I think, is a very important piece. It's a protection of our freedom and of the individual. Many people are very connected to their land. It has memories, it has connections, and it's the land that is very important in so many cases. As a government we really did commit to restoring the property rights and finding that balance, and this legislation really honours that commitment.

Statutory consent is such a huge piece of property rights, and this bill takes that into account and addresses it. For those who may not know, statutory consent is any government grant of the right to use resources owned by the government such as a water licence or a grazing lease.

4:50

In 2009, when the Stelmach government introduced the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, which created the seven planning regional zones and the natural watersheds, it had some adverse impact on property rights. While the bill itself was very well meaning – the bill has done a lot to serve the government of Alberta and the people of Alberta – there were some unplanned, unintended consequences. The piece around property rights is surely one of them. Under the act regional plans came to authorize expropriations by the Crown, which could then affect or cancel statutory consent issues under other acts.

Essentially, it meant that a government is able to take property from an owner for public use or benefit such as building a highway or a bridge or some other infrastructure development and then can also consequently cancel the licences and permits that are crucial to many Albertans. While development of essential and major infrastructure projects is absolutely required and it is part of the benefit of a growing province and is needed to support that growth, it cannot come at the cost of our landowners. Laws for ensuring judicial review and fair compensation to protect property owners absolutely must exist. It must be enshrined in legislation to prevent abuse.

Bill 206, repeal of section 14 of the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, will prevent regulations from being made in other acts to implement a regional plan, and these changes will then allow a person to recover any financial losses if a regional plan impacts statutory consent. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, this very clearly sets a framework in legislation that prevents regulation from trumping property rights. I think that is so fundamental to the way of life we have here in Alberta. You buy your piece of land and you build on it or you enjoy it, and it is yours. It becomes part of who you are in many cases. Bill 206 – and so many thanks to my friend and colleague the MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat for having this private member's bill. I think it really does take a step in the right direction to allow for compensation and recourse in the courts under the Alberta Bill of Rights.

Currently the Alberta Bill of Rights enshrines the right of the individual to liberty, security of the person, the enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law. I believe that by changing this and adding the protections here, it is a huge win for landowners and signals to investors all across the province and across the world that Alberta is an amazing place to invest, purchase land, and grow their business. I think that's exactly what our government is trying to do right now. We are working to protect lives and livelihoods and get us back on track after the pandemic and our economic challenges. This piece of legislation will actually further our government's overall commitment to improving lives and livelihoods.

Bill 206 then further champions the property rights and landowners by amending the Land Titles Act to bar adverse possession claims so that Albertans can no longer allow squatters to make legal claims to someone's property. I remember when I first heard about this and I was very confused and then started reading some of the case law that exists on the subject. I'm no lawyer, so I'm not going to try and explain how this came to be, but I remember sitting there very confused that this was something that was still allowable and legal in the province of Alberta. To me, a person who doesn't have a legal title on the land should not be able to gain ownership based on continuous occupation. To me, that is pretty much common sense. I know as children we were told that just because you have your sister's toy does not mean it's your toy. We had to be told that a few times before it sunk through, but it eventually became something that I realized was absolutely common sense. You couldn't just take

something from someone and have it for long enough that it just became yours.

The bill, once again, brings another bit of common sense by amending the Responsible Energy Development Act. This amendment, then, requires the Alberta Energy Regulator to give direct notice to the landowner and adjacent landowners when any of the activities might affect those landowners. I think that's so critically important. In a province, especially a province that we're looking to have responsible energy development, we absolutely must be working with the landowners and giving them notice if work is going on in their lands or even adjacent lands because there have been lots of situations where work on adjacent lands has affected that owner if they need to have a road through someone's property in order to get to their project. This amendment will then require the reversal of the current system where those potentially affected need to respond to public notices.

I really want to thank the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for sponsoring his bill and for so many of the members in the United Conservative caucus for continuing to be such strong champions of property rights. I think it's really one of the things that brings our entire caucus together. It's one of the pieces that brings so many conservatives all across the province together, the idea about protecting and enshrining property rights.

The Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act is absolutely a common-sense bill that will benefit all Albertans and even investors who have needed this for such a long time. I think it really does achieve the right balance and will provide that stability for the landowners, the farmers, the investors, and I hope that all members in this Assembly will join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. I believe we have about three minutes remaining in this section of debate.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour to at least start to make some comments around Bill 206 given the short time we have today to talk about it. You know, getting the chance to rise and to speak to private members' business is always a good thing to do. As the Government House Leader said just last week, it's a good thing to work on the important business of the private members of this Chamber. It's just unfortunate that it's not all the private members of this Chamber that get the opportunity to have their bills debated fully within this House.

At the very least, we are here talking about Bill 206, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, a bill that is quite extensive in some of the things that it is changing. We are seeing changes to the Alberta Bill of Rights. We are seeing changes proposed to Alberta Land Stewardship Act, Land Titles Act, Limitations Act, Responsible Energy Development Act. I must say, Mr. Speaker, with changes quite this ranging, I'm wondering a little bit why it's being looked at through a private member's bill. Normally government would probably look at something at this scale. This is not to say that's any kind of a fault to the private members. I mean, the reality is that the private members only have limited resources. That's not a bad thing; it's just a thing. But normally government does have the resources to be able to fully consult around this.

You know, it was a little bit of that lack of consultation that I noticed within the private members' committee. There was certainly no technical briefing that was able to be had on some of the changes being proposed within the bill. That would have been rather helpful. Unfortunately, given the challenges that we had with the original bill sponsor, what other challenges might have existed with the bill, a technical briefing might have been able to identify

those kinds of things and maybe even allowed the private members' committee to submit recommendations or something like that for the House to consider during the debate of Bill 206.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt; however, the time for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

### 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.

[Debate adjourned March 8: Ms Phillips speaking]

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 516 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Irwin	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Loyola		

Against the motion:

Ellis	Luan	Rutherford
Getson	McIver	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Stephan
Glubish	Pon	Turton
Goodridge	Reid	Walker
Guthrie	Rosin	Williams
Hunter	Rowswell	Wilson
LaGrange		

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 22
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 516 lost]

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

**Member Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move, pursuant to Standing Order 8(1.2), "Notwithstanding suborder (1.1) and (5), on a Monday afternoon following the conclusion of business for consideration of the Assembly under suborder (1), the Assembly [now] consider the motion other than a Government motion that is next in precedence on the Order Paper" as the sponsor of that motion other than a government motion.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion, and a simple majority of the Assembly is required to pass it. The motion is to proceed immediately to Motion Other than Government Motion 511, as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Irwin	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Loyola		

Against the motion:

Ellis	Luan	Rutherford
Getson	McIver	Singh
Glasgo	Orr	Stephan
Glubish	Pon	Turton
Goodridge	Reid	Walker
Guthrie	Rosin	Wilson
Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange		

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 22
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[Motion lost]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 53

#### Service Alberta Statutes (Virtual Meetings) Amendment Act, 2021

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to stand today to open debate on Bill 53, the Service Alberta Statutes (Virtual Meetings) Amendment Act, 2021.

I don't have to tell you that the past year has been a difficult one for Albertans. Life has changed substantially and looks quite different from a year ago. The way we interact and the places where we interact look quite different. I think you'd agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that prior to the pandemic we felt like we lived in the digital age, and we were sometimes amazed at how much we had come to rely on our computers and our tablets and our smart phones. Then along comes the coronavirus. Alberta identifies its first cases, and that set off a trajectory that has led us to where we are today. Life has changed not just in our province but in every country and every city around the world. In order to stop the spread and bend the curve, jurisdictions the world over have limited larger meetings and reduced the amount of people that individuals can come into contact with. While these measures can be difficult to follow, they are necessary and have helped to bring down the number of new daily cases.

In light of the public health restrictions I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that while we all realized that we lived in a digital world full of all sorts of tools and technologies, there were many applications that we had not considered because we hadn't needed to yet. But the same public health restrictions and the instantaneous need to move fully to technology in order to interact and conduct business electronically also helped to identify that some of Service Alberta's legislation had not adapted to the current digital world.

The bill that we have before us today, Mr. Speaker, seeks to amend five separate pieces of legislation in order to address these outdated sections. For those particularly interested in policy and legislation, those acts are the Business Corporations Act, Companies Act, Condominium Property Act, the Cooperatives Act,

and the Societies Act. Each of these pieces of legislation is currently silent on meeting requirements and relies on the specific bylaws of associations, where they refer to in-person meetings or voting by raising of hands. As I'm sure you can imagine, this makes it difficult for many for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to conduct their important business because they did not and do not currently have the option of convening in-person meetings and carrying out their legislated duties. This obviously has a negative effect on corporations, nonprofit companies, societies, co-operatives, and condominium corporations because it prevents them from achieving their objectives and fulfilling their obligations to hold annual general meetings.

Over the past months I've heard from many Albertans and organizations, and they have expressed a real desire for changes to meeting processes in the governing legislation. For example, a community association vice president from Calgary wrote to me.

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones well. I have just one quick question. Is it common or have you heard of condominium boards announcing to cancel AGMs and extend director terms past bylaw limits by up to or in excess of a year due to COVID-19 venue occupancy limitations?

Another piece of correspondence to share with you, Mr. Speaker, is from a condominium property manager in Canmore who wrote:

Our federal and provincial leaders have set clear COVID-19 restrictions regarding in-person gatherings on one hand and on the other hand your department requires that AGM meeting be carried out in-person in order to be legally binding which flies in the face of everything we are being asked to do as a nation. This puts corporations in a position of choosing which arm of the government to obey and flaunts all public health safety guidelines we have been asked to operate under with a view to ending the pandemic.

In my role as a property manager this puts me in an impossible position. Company policy adopted in March 2020 does not allow our staff to attend in-person meetings with a view to keeping us safe . . . I hope you will please consider changing your position on this and either allow for electronic AGM meetings or mandating a second order to allow corporations to further delay their AGM meetings.

Another property manager from Edmonton wrote to me and said:

Please issue an order allowing Condominium AGMs to happen virtually, at least for the duration of the COVID meeting restrictions. Our last AGM was almost 2 years ago, and we have significant problems that must be dealt with.

**5:40**

As you can see from just these three e-mails, the inability to meet virtually has created confusion and difficulty for organizations all across the province. Today I want to say to them, through you, Mr. Speaker: I've heard you, and I agree with you. That is why we are tabling this legislation, to come and address these very real concerns and to come to your aid.

In response, this bill provides these organizations with the ability to meet safely and remotely, giving organizations the option of issuing electronic notifications for meetings and conducting the meetings and voting virtually. Organizations have had tremendous obstacles to overcome as a result of the pandemic. They need a legislative framework that ensures that the good work of their organizations can continue in the safest, most efficient manner possible during this time as well as on a go-forward basis.

I think it's also important to note that not only do these amendments provide flexibility for for-profit and nonprofit organizations moving forward; they are also going to be retroactive to August 15 of last year. As I hope that you and all members of the Assembly recall, last spring and summer a ministerial order was in effect that permitted virtual meetings, but it expired on August 14 in accordance with the time limits around the state of public health emergency. The fact that these

amendments will be retroactive to that date means that any organizations that held electronic meetings since then can rest assured that the business conducted at these meetings will be considered valid. The amendments in Bill 53 are enabling in nature only and will by no means obligate any organization to use electronic means if it is their choice not to do so.

For these reasons, I'm pleased to move that Bill 53 be read a second time, and I also will move to adjourn debate at this time. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 55

#### College of Alberta School Superintendents Act

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and move second reading of Bill 55, the College of Alberta School Superintendents Act.

I was thrilled to be joined by two of our key education stakeholders last week to announce the introduction of this bill. This legislation shows how Alberta's government is committed to strengthening our kindergarten to grade 12 education system. One important step towards this goal is to recognize the College of Alberta School Superintendents as a professional, legislated organization for superintendents, deputy superintendents, and eligible central office teacher leaders employed in Alberta's public, separate, and francophone school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, our journey towards building this legislation began in fall 2019, when the College of Alberta School Superintendents, or CASS, submitted a proposal to be recognized through legislation. In summer 2020 my department discussed the proposal with CASS and other stakeholders within the education sector. This engagement included face-to-face or virtual discussions with key stakeholders, including CASS, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools. We also engaged the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta, the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta, and First Nations superintendents and education directors. We listened to our valued education system leaders, and Bill 55 is the result of that co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, superintendents have a significant impact on student and teacher success. Therefore, it is vital that they are held to a high level of oversight and integrity. Alberta parents and teachers deserve nothing less, and that is exactly what Bill 55 will deliver. Put simply, this act is about better outcomes within our education system to make sure that every one of our students receives the best possible education.

Bill 55 can be divided into three themes: governance, accountability, and leadership excellence. First, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to governance, the act would divide CASS membership into two distinct categories, regulated and nonregulated, which is a change in structure of how CASS currently organizes its membership. CASS is currently a voluntary organization of about 320 members. This includes superintendents from public, separate, and francophone school authorities, charter schools, and First Nations education directors. Other members include assistant or deputy superintendents, directors, and other senior central office staff. Under this proposed act membership will be a requirement for superintendents; chief deputy superintendents, including charter schools; and teacher leaders employed in central office positions in public, separate, and francophone school authorities and regional

authorities who voluntarily elect out of active membership in the ATA, or the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Mr. Speaker, let me state clearly that principals employed in these school boards and authorities cannot hold mandatory regulated membership in CASS. Under the act CASS will have bylaw-making powers to set additional levels of membership for nonregulated members. This may include system leaders in First Nations school authorities and independent schools or retired superintendents or university professors, as examples.

Mr. Speaker, this act also requires that CASS's board of directors include public members to serve on the board along with regulated and nonregulated members of CASS. Public members would be appointed by the Minister of Education for a fixed term after consultation with CASS. The qualifications and recruitment for public members will be based on best practices established by government, similar to other agencies, boards, and commissions.

Mr. Speaking, moving on to accountability and leadership excellence, CASS would be required to submit an annual report to this House each year and hold an annual general meeting under the act. The submission of an annual report to the Legislature for a professional organization aligns with general principles of good governance and transparency. It will also result in appropriate oversight. This is also in keeping with jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Ontario, who also have professional organizations for teacher leaders.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, under the act CASS would be responsible for ensuring its regulated members are skilled and competent in their professional practice. CASS would also be responsible for offering professional development to its regulated members and setting learning requirements. The act makes it clear that we believe in the important role that superintendents and other teacher leaders employed in central office school jurisdictions play in making sure students receive a high-quality education. To that end, CASS will be responsible for ensuring its members meet government's superintendent leadership quality standards and the leadership quality standard, which together ensure system excellence and which recently came into force.

CASS will also oversee the professional discipline of its regulated members by addressing complaints of alleged unprofessional conduct and professional incompetence filed against its regulated members. CASS would still have to report information to me as the Minister of Education and the registrar as required. The shift in responsibility for oversight of professional discipline matters is simply moving from the registrar at Alberta Education, who currently oversees professional discipline for these individuals, to CASS. This will make the governance structure of CASS's professional discipline matters resemble that of other legislated structures in Alberta, specifically the practice review of teachers and teacher leaders regulation. These regulations establish how complaints will be addressed in situations where the teacher or teacher leader is not subject to the Teaching Profession Act.

Mr. Speaker, superintendents play an important role in making sure every student receives a high-quality education. Establishing the College of Alberta School Superintendents as a legislated organization will build upon an already excellent education system. Superintendents have a significant impact on students and teachers. They need to be held to a high level of oversight and integrity. Alberta's parents and teachers deserve nothing less. I believe this is accomplished with this act.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, it is for these reasons that I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 55. I'm asking all members of this House for



their support of Bill 55, College of Alberta School Superintendents Act.

With that, I will also move to adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 56

#### Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and move second reading of Bill 56, the Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021.

The bill makes two significant changes that affect municipalities and protect the lives and livelihoods of Albertans. First, it amends the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act to ensure that job-creating infrastructure funding for municipalities aligns with the fiscal realities and stimulus needs of our province and our communities as set out in Budget 2021. It will also protect public safety by strengthening Alberta's 911 system and preparing our province for necessary 911 upgrades.

I'll speak first about the local government fiscal framework. Alberta has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global collapse of energy prices, and the worst economic contraction since the '30s. Our costs have been high while revenues have been low. Through it all, Alberta's government has been there to support Albertans. We continue to be there every step of the way.

Alberta's recovery plan includes more than \$10 billion in infrastructure funding. Major investments in schools, roads, hospitals, and other construction projects are getting Albertans back to work while building important infrastructure that communities need. At the same time, we've been told by the MacKinnon panel on Alberta's finances that Alberta's expenditures far exceed those of other provinces and have been exceeding them for more than 20 years on a per capita basis. The panel found that this spending was just not sustainable in the long run. We need to live within our means. That's why in Budget 2021 capital funding through the municipal sustainability initiative, MSI, was extended to '23-24 and reduced by 25 per cent over the next three years.

The current Local Government Fiscal Framework Act mandates that a new fiscal framework be implemented in '22-23. The problem with that is that it doesn't allow us to adequately respond to the pandemic and to Alberta's new fiscal reality. The local government fiscal framework is too prescriptive to deal with this challenge, so to protect lives and livelihoods and to implement the changes set out in Budget 2021, we need to make amendments to the act. The amendments to the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act in the local measures statutes amendment act will extend the municipal sustainability initiative for two more years as we rein in spending. As part of Budget 2021 municipalities will receive \$1.196 billion in 2021, in the next two years \$485 million, averaging \$722 million over the three years, which is the 25 per cent reduction.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask members – they will speak more on this when we come back, but for now I will ask members of the House to support second reading of Bill 56.

At this point I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 57

#### Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2021

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and move second reading of Bill 57, the Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2021.

First, I want to say how proud Alberta is to be home to the only Métis land base in Canada, and I believe it's the only land base in North America. There's a total of 1.25 million acres in the Métis settlements area. This makes up a land mass about the size of Prince Edward Island, with a population of about 5,600 strong across eight settlements in northern Alberta.

The settlements range from about 600 to 1,000 people. They may be small, Mr. Speaker, but that has no measure on what they can accomplish and what I have seen happening at the settlements. They're working to build strong economies for each settlement to continue to be a home for Métis culture, tradition, and growth. Alberta's government wants to give Métis settlements the tools they need to be successful, and Bill 57 will do just that. Settlement members have told me that they want strong, accountable governance and financial sustainability. They want greater autonomy. Amending the 30-year-old Metis Settlements Act gets us closer to that goal. Past governments tried to tackle this and amend the act, including the previous government, but they didn't see it across the finish line, but Alberta's government will.

For the past year, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government has been discussing modernizing the Metis Settlements Act with the Metis Settlements General Council. I've been talking with settlement leadership, too, and I hear the need for change. We want to see the Métis settlements succeed, and we believe that this is the path forward. Now is the time to move toward more sustainable communities and governance, the kind that Métis leaders and people expected.

There are two significant upcoming events that make this the right time to modernize the act. One is the end of the long-term governance and funding agreement on March 31, 2023, bringing to conclusion Alberta's \$85 million commitment to the settlements. The long-term agreement was used to develop initiatives aimed at improving governance, education, infrastructure, essential services, and more on the Métis settlements. The second reason for bringing Bill 57 now is that it works in the timing of the Métis settlement council elections on October 4. Acting now, Mr. Speaker, creates an important transition period to work with the settlement councils and the LTENs before the elections are held.

Proposed amendments are all possible with Indigenous Relations' existing budget and will help lead settlements to self-sufficiency. The amendments will help with governance, financial sustainability, and get rid of all the outdated provisions in the legislation. These are all measures that can lead to better outcomes for the settlement members.

I'd like to share some of those major amendments. First, Bill 57 will give settlement councils the ability to have members pay for essential services, which can contribute to financial sustainability for the settlements. It's not consistent across the settlements when it comes to paying for essential services like water and sewer and snow removal, for example. The amendments we're proposing, Mr. Speaker, give councils clear accountability for enforcing those bylaws. The ability to collect fees for services creates another revenue source for settlements, which leads to a more sustainable economy.

Mr. Speaker, all this means is that we are increasing council responsibility to charge for services such as water and roads. This is not a heavy-handed approach. This change simply gives council the ability to collect fees if they feel the need to do so to provide sustainability, which will benefit future generations. We are simply encouraging a stronger foundation of self-government.

Second, we are proposing some flexibility on the number of councillors needed to serve their communities. This can streamline and reduce the cost of governance for settlements. The cost and size of Métis settlements and governance is unsustainable right now. Not every settlement needs to have the same number of councillors, and this bill makes it possible for settlement councils to make that decision. Originally we were proposing to reduce the number of settlement councillors from five to three, but after speaking with settlement leaders, we changed the amendment so the settlements have the authority to decide the size of their councils. Now the proposed amendment reads “at least 3 and not more than” five. Their choice on the number of councillors will be based on what they need and what they can afford.

Other amendments ensure that only chairs would have a full-time salary, and councillors would be paid up to 50 per cent of the chair’s salary. Mr. Speaker, it would be up to the settlements to set the chair’s salary, but they’ll need to consider it within the operating budget and also need to balance the budget. Let me be clear about the intent behind this change. In speaking with members, this change ensures councillors have the flexibility to be able to support their income by holding additional employment while being able to remain elected officials. We are listening to what we heard and taking action.

The Metis Settlements General Council was established by the Metis Settlements Act and it’s a collective interest of the eight settlements. Currently the general council has four executive officers because that is required under the act. An amendment will also reduce that to two. The MSGC can choose if they need and can afford one or two executives.

Another amendment is taking the Minister of Indigenous Relations out of settlements’ financial operations. This is a big one, Mr. Speaker. The amendments will put financial accountability in the hands of the councils. For example, they all have to agree on how to spend money from the future fund. This is just good government and good planning. We want to ensure that Métis settlements can control their own destiny. For as long as I’ve been the Minister of Indigenous Relations, I’ve been hearing directly from the settlement members that they want more accountable and transparent governance. I also recently sat in a conference room in High Prairie for an hour and listened to concerns from a room full of Métis settlement members on the need for fiscal accountability

and transparency. As you can see, the need for change has been driven by the grassroots.

Finally, I want to take out parts of the legislation that are outdated and can be removed. All of these proposed amendments address concerns I hear from settlement members about a desire to strengthen fiscal management, accountability, and transparency in their local government council.

Mr. Speaker, I’m confident that this is the right direction and the right time. I hope members on both sides of the House will support Bill 57 and help fulfill the vision of the settlement members and leaders for self-government and self-sufficiency. Métis settlements belong to the future residents and the future of Alberta. Their success shows what is possible working together. This act will increase community sustainability and fiscal accountability, and it will empower Métis settlements to create self-sufficient communities to support future generations.

We’re updating this 30-year-old legislation with Métis settlements on the road to self-determination. This bill will ensure Métis settlements can control their own destiny so they can be financially independent.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene tonight and tomorrow morning for the consideration of the main estimates. Tonight the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Environment and Parks in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]









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For inquiries contact:

Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: [AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca)