



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 17, 2021

Day 86

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UC),
Government Whip
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UC)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UC)
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UC),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UC)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UC)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC),
Government House Leader
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UC)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (Ind)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UC)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 62

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, QC, Clerk	Nancy Robert, Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Sergeant-at-Arms
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary Programs	Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

Executive Council

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreeshen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

Parliamentary Secretaries

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Orr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Eggen
Gray
Issik
Jones
Phillips
Singh
Yaseen

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goodridge
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Glasgo
Gotfried
Lovely
Neudorf
Pancholi
Rutherford
Sabir
Smith

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Schow
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Ceci
Lovely
Loyola
Rosin
Rutherford
Shepherd
Smith
Sweet
Yaseen

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Ellis
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Barnes
Deol
Ganley
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
Guthrie
Issik
Loewen
Singh
Turton
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement.

Advocacy for Alberta's Oil and Gas Industries

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know all too well that there are many opponents of our oil and gas sector and our province's economic recovery. For more than a decade some hypocritical American billionaires, a number of Hollywood celebrities, U.S.-based foundations, and foreign-funded environmental groups along with most other extreme activists have sought to land-lock our oil sands and harm the economic well-being of our country, province, communities, and Alberta families. Now, in the midst of the pandemic and the worst economic downturn since the '30s, these people, with no regard for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who work in this industry to put food on the table, are intent on delivering a knock-down blow to our economic future.

The last government may have been content to let the lies and defamation against our industry go unanswered; this government will not. Mr. Speaker, just this week we saw a familiar face from Hollywood launch another attack. Good old Jane Fonda showed up. She went to the state of Minnesota, presumably flying on a jet, you know, that would have been powered by petroleum products, to try to obstruct completion of Enbridge line 3 and spread misinformation about our responsibly produced Canadian oil.

This, of course, is on the heels of the much talked about animated film *Bigfoot Family*. Now, let's be clear. This film was an attempt to target children to indoctrinate them to believe that oil and gas is evil. The members opposite may think that that is a joke, but then again the members opposite think it's a good idea to bring Extinction Rebellion into the classrooms to indoctrinate our kids, too.

Mr. Speaker, our industry is the best in the world, and the truth does matter. While some may be content with acting as apologists for the opponents of that truth, on this side of the aisle we will stand up, and we will defend our energy sector.

Private-sector Labour Relations

Ms Gray: Across Alberta, workers in the private sector are increasingly realizing that this government, this Premier, and this labour minister never have their backs. Whether it's keeping workplaces safe from COVID, ensuring workers are protected from unfair lockouts, or trying to save high-quality jobs and protect them from contracting out, whatever the case, Alberta's private-sector workers have unfortunately learned that this labour minister will

always stick to his hands off the wheel approach to all labour issues, and working Albertans end up paying the price every single time.

Workers at Cargill, Harmony Beef, JBS, and Olymel meat-packing plants learned the very hard way that when it comes to taking preventative safety steps, this minister will always put employers' profits ahead of worker safety. This government's consistent unwillingness to step in and enforce stronger safety measures, as COVID ran wild through plant after plant after plant and from there into the surrounding communities, has illustrated the UCP's purely ideological and completely failed approach to governing.

Here in Edmonton we see another example of this labour minister's unwillingness to intervene playing out as the unionized workers at CESSCO Fabrication & Engineering have been locked out by their employer for going on nine months now. Nine months. The workers on that picket line will tell anyone that visits them that this dispute is about an employer trying to remove their pensions. No wonder this government won't intervene; they've been known to steal a pension or two themselves. Birds of a feather: too bad that in this case we're talking about vultures.

Now we see the labour minister's inaction again on full display as workers at the Coca-Cola plant in Calgary are forced to take job action to protect their fellow workers as the employer attempts to needlessly contract out delivery services. The brothers and sisters in Teamsters 987 know that those of us on the NDP side of this House support your efforts to protect high-quality jobs for Albertans. Unfortunately, this government and minister will not lift a finger to help you resolve this impasse. They say that they care about jobs for Albertans, but they do not show it through their actions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Recall Act

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the responsibility and duty of MLAs to represent our constituents in this Chamber. Even if our constituents have differing opinions on how the government should operate, it's our job to listen and to voice their concerns. I know that most MLAs in this Assembly understand this and take this part of the job very seriously, but when MLAs do not do their job correctly, their constituents should not be left unheard. This was seen in the previous government when Sandra Jansen crossed the floor and betrayed her Conservative constituency. How was she rewarded? By being put into cabinet.

This is why our government campaigned on a platform to introduce recall legislation. I know that many Albertans have been asking if we continue to hold this campaign promise. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to say that this is a promise made and a promise kept. As chair of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee I'm glad to see the recommendations that we have made put into legislation. The committee's goals were to review questions surrounding recall and citizens' initiatives and to review the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. The committee met from July to December of last year, and throughout the committee process we heard from stakeholders that shared their recommendations and answered our questions. Once the committee report was drafted, I was glad to see that our province is now on the right track towards accountability for our representatives. I am honoured to see that Alberta's government is adopting the 17 recommendations on recall and that we are moving the next step towards introducing that recall, which was done two days ago.

Recall adds to our democratic process by allowing unhappy voters to be able to hold their representatives accountable, which is fundamental in democracy. Provinces such as British Columbia have this legislation and allow for more democracy for voters. Recall legislation adds to our democratic rights, and having it here in this province continues to make Alberta the land of the strong and the free.

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

Cancer Care and COVID-19

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I met with members of the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network just last week. They wanted to share their new patient survey with me, that looked at how COVID-19 has disrupted cancer care in Canada. As a cancer survivor myself I know first-hand how important rapid diagnosis and treatment is.

One of the most startling results identified in the report is the fact that 36 per cent of cancer patients across Alberta chose to cancel, postpone, or avoid a health care service during the pandemic. This includes Albertan cancer patients avoiding booking an appointment with their doctor even when one is needed, choosing to cancel or postpone a lab test or diagnostic procedure, cancelling visiting a hospital for cancer care, even avoiding going to the emergency room for symptoms related to their cancer. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, cancer patients remain in doubt about accessing health care services, and this can only lead to worse health outcomes for cancer patients all across Alberta.

I along with the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network know that to save lives, action must be taken. Motivated by the more than 225,000 Canadians that are diagnosed with cancer each and every year, I hope to see all cancer patients and their caregivers vaccinated as soon as possible. By prioritizing the vaccination of cancer patients and their caregivers, the anxiety and fear that are preventing patients from accessing care can be greatly reduced, ultimately leading to better health outcomes for patients.

Cancer patients deserve safe and timely access to care, and by ensuring the vaccination of cancer patients and their caregivers, they can once again feel confident interacting with the health care system, that they so rely on. What we all must understand is that cancer can't be cancelled; it can't be postponed. Mr. Speaker, cancer can't wait.

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

Energy Industries and Alberta's Economy

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about supporting our energy sector, especially given that we are a global leader in environmental, social, and governance standards, or ESG. Supporting our energy industry benefits us all, no matter who you are. Now, I'm not sure if you know this, but I'm 41 years old. Of course, age is just a number, but in that time I've had the opportunity to meet many folks from all walks of life and work in many industries. I've been a business owner, a lawyer, in finance, server at a restaurant, door-to-door sales. I was even a tree planter. All of these jobs have one thing in common. When the energy sector is being supported, jobs, opportunities, and support for everyone goes up.

1:40

Recently we have seen opposition to our energy sector. When projects like KXL or Energy East or Trans Mountain get cancelled, I can't help but wonder how this hurts jobs, opportunities for our

youth, our general tax base, which, of course, pays for social programs and wages for the public sector, like teachers, nurses, and doctors, and, perhaps more importantly, families.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am also a father of two. Of course, one person's family dynamic isn't better than another, but having kids changed how I look at things. In Calgary-Currie alone we've lost thousands of jobs in or derived from the energy sector. That means real families who are suffering. Just so you know, I have personally had to help several local charities deliver food in my community. That is how urgent and important this truly is.

If anything, this is a call for unity. It doesn't matter how old you are, if you work in the public or private sector, if you receive social program support, how you live, who you love, or what you or your family looks like. If you support what I am talking about here today, you support your community, your neighbours, your friends, and your family. Our ESG-leading energy sector is a good-news story for everyone.

Community Organizations

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, no matter where you live in this province, there are community organizations that support you, your family, and your business. Community organizations, including community leagues and ag societies, keep us connected and provide gathering spaces. The buildings that these organizations run and maintain house playschools, Scouts' and Girl Guides' meetings, dance classes, exercise classes, fundraisers, skate shacks, meeting spaces, and so much more.

The people that run these community organizations are often volunteers that provide opportunities for social gatherings, build playgrounds and skate parks for children, and keep the members of the community informed through newsletters, e-mail, and now social media. They organize programs like soccer, summer camps, outdoor rinks in the winter, and partner with other sports organizations to house and provide recreational opportunities, from baseball to skateboard lessons, to yoga classes and walking clubs. Through events they support local business by partnering with grocery stores, caterers, and entrepreneurs and by hiring local contractors and business owners for upkeep, maintenance, and infrastructure. They provide financial supports for students and families in need. In short, they are literally the heart of our communities.

In Edmonton the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues has been working for almost a century to build and develop community and culture in every neighbourhood in the city. In Calgary the Federation of Calgary Communities has been doing the same for 60 years. In rural areas the ag societies provide the community spaces and support for communities. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about civil society, it is these community organizations that often come to mind, and without ongoing government support in a time when they are losing revenues, we risk losing them all. I ask all members of this House to join me in a commitment to ensure that these vital organizations are appreciated and supported by this government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has a statement.

David Ennis Parole Application

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Airdrie-East one of my top priorities is to protect the safety and lives of my constituents. In August 1982 David Shearing, now known as David Ennis, shot grandparents George and Edith Bentley and parents Bob and Jackie Johnson as they camped near Wells Gray provincial park. Ennis then kidnapped the Johnson's 13- and 11-year-old

daughters, Janet and Karen, who he then tortured and sexually assaulted for almost a week before murdering them. Ennis was eventually arrested and pled guilty to six counts of second-degree murder and was sentenced to life with no chance of parole for 25 years, which he's thankfully been denied now twice.

Now Ennis is once again eligible for full parole review, with his hearing before the Parole Board of Canada scheduled for July 2021. Ennis has stated that he would like to move and live around the community of Bowden, a mere 40-minute drive from Airdrie, could be in Airdrie, and this would be permitted under his conditions of full parole. Kristal Woolf, a family member of the Johnson family, has started a petition asking the Parole Board of Canada to deny this cold-hearted murderer parole. It now has over 72,000 signatures.

Albertans elected a government that would ensure that offenders, including parolees, would not be able to revictimize through an out-of-touch, revolving-door justice system. That's why we passed legislation denying dangerous offenders the ability to change their names and why the Alberta Parole Board was formed earlier this year.

For the sake of protecting the families of Airdrie and surrounding area and to maintain our community's faith in Canada's justice system, I strongly urge the Parole Board of Canada to do the right thing and deny parole for Ennis. Last week I mailed a letter to the Parole Board of Canada urging them to deny Ennis full parole. Please join me in that. This convicted criminal has destroyed the lives of so many, and his presence would pose a serious risk to the people of our province.

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

Economic Downturn in Calgary

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last election the Premier promised that his multibillion-dollar corporate handout would attract global investment and create 55,000 jobs, but we have seen the opposite. Before the pandemic even hit, investment fell, our economy tanked, and 50,000 jobs were lost. We saw companies like EnCana pack up and leave Calgary, and any hope of diversification vanished as the UCP declared it a luxury. We saw tech companies leave while others crossed Calgary off their list of places to move to.

Since then we have seen the UCP fail to get Keystone XL built, leading to the loss of at least \$1.3 billion and jobs. We have seen the purchase of Shaw, that will lead to the loss of another head office in Calgary. Just yesterday Cenovus announced the loss of 1,000 jobs in their second round of layoffs. Now we have the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. Also, the big banks are forecasting Alberta will have the slowest recovery out of all the provinces. Calgary now has a record-high office vacancy rate that is expected to surpass 30 per cent.

The Finance minister has said that it's not his problem to solve. It will take more than just positive thoughts to get Calgaryans back to work and fill the office towers in Calgary. It will take a real plan, that the UCP is lacking. That's why Alberta's NDP has started the Alberta's future initiative. I encourage all Albertans to visit albertasfuture.ca to share their thoughts on how we can build an economic recovery for our province and for our city. Let's look past the Premier's ego and his failed economic policies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

La Francophonie Albertaine

Ms Goodridge: Merci, M. le Président. Mars est officiellement reconnu comme Mois de la francophonie albertaine. Depuis l'époque où l'Alberta était connue sous le nom de Terre de Rupert, la langue et la culture françaises ont eu une grande influence sur la vie de la province. Depuis les premiers pionniers jusqu'aux nouveaux arrivants venus d'ici et d'ailleurs, des francophones ont fait de l'Alberta leur chez-soi.

Au sein de notre pays, l'Alberta abrite l'une des populations francophones dont la croissance est la plus rapide et la diversité culturelle la plus grande. En Alberta, les membres de ces communautés dynamiques vivent, travaillent, apprennent, et se divertissent en français, que cette langue soit leur première langue ou qu'ils l'aient apprise par choix. Dans toute la province la vitalité de la francophonie se manifeste par la présence d'un vaste réseau d'organismes francophones. De plus, quatre conseils scolaires francophones régionaux gèrent 42 écoles et instruisent 8 800 élèves.

Le français est également la langue de choix de nombreux étudiants de notre province. Saviez-vous qu'environ 47 000 étudiants suivent un programme d'immersion française et que 148 000 autres apprennent le français comme langue seconde? Voilà une autre indication que les Albertaines et les Albertains ont bien compris toutes les possibilités qui s'offrent aux personnes bilingues.

La francophonie albertaine est florissante, et sa population connaît la croissance la plus rapide au Canada. Ce mois nous donne l'occasion de reconnaître les contributions importantes apportées par les Albertains et les Albertaines d'expression française dans la province et les contributions qu'ils continuent à apporter en tant que partie intégrante de l'identité culturelle en Alberta.

M. le Président, je remercie les membres de cette assemblée de leur soutien continu, et ce mois-ci j'encourage toute la population à explorer la grande influence de la langue et de la culture françaises.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is formally known as Alberta Francophonie Month within the province of Alberta. From the time Alberta was known as Rupert's Land, French language and culture have made an indelible mark on this province. From early settlers of yesterday to the newcomers from near and far, francophones have made Alberta their home.

Alberta is home to one of the fastest growing and culturally diverse French-speaking populations in Canada. Here these vibrant communities live, work, learn, and play in French, whether it be as a mother tongue or a language learned by choice. Across the province the vitality of the Francophonie is evident by the presence of a vast network of francophone organizations. In addition, four regional francophone school boards manage 42 schools and educate some 8,800 students.

French is also the language of choice for many students across the province, with approximately 47,000 students enrolled in French immersion programs and another 148,000 enrolled in French as a second language. It is another sign that Albertans value the opportunities afforded bilingual speakers.

Alberta's Francophonie is thriving, with its population growing the fastest in Canada. This month we recognize the important contributions that French-speaking Albertans have made to our province and the contributions they continue to make as part of the cultural identity of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I thank members of this House for their continued support, and I encourage Albertans to explore Alberta's notable French influence. [As submitted]

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills I am pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-North. This bill was referred to the committee on December 8, 2020. The report recommends that Bill 212 proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on Bill 212.

Thank you.

1:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, the motion for concurrence in the report on Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b). Are there any members wishing to speak to concurrence? I see members wishing to speak to concurrence. That will take place on the next available Monday.

Oral Question Period

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

Job Creation

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thousand: that's how many people lost their jobs yesterday because of the Cenovus-Husky merger. They were instructed to be at their desks as the layoffs were conducted over Zoom for the second time in six weeks. This is no doubt a difficult time for them and their families, as it is for the many more Albertans who are struggling as our economy faces unprecedented uncertainty. We need action on jobs now. Will the Premier agree to an emergency debate about the government's job-creation plans today, and if not, why not?

Mr. Kenney: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me wish all members a happy St. Patrick's Day.

I share the concern of the hon. Leader of the Opposition with respect to those people who have been affected by the layoffs in the consolidation between Cenovus and Husky. The good news, which the NDP doesn't want to talk about, is that we've seen the creation of 266,000 jobs in Alberta since the pandemic began. We are ahead of other provinces in replacing the pandemic job loss, with 37,000 new jobs created in the last two months. Alberta is leading the country in job creation. More and more banks and think tanks are projecting that we will lead the country in economic and job growth in the year ahead.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the Premier is getting that information, because you know what else the BMO says? It says that when it comes to job creation, next year we will not be leading the country. We won't even be number 2. We will be sixth, behind Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and B.C. When it comes to GDP growth, RBC projects that Alberta will make up the least ground of all provinces when it comes to restoring our pre-pandemic GDP. The Premier needs to roll up his Mission Accomplished banner and then roll up his sleeves and get to work. Why won't he?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, thankfully, I'm not getting this hard data from the NDP research bureau, which is all doom and gloom. I'm getting it from Statistics Canada, the Bank of Montreal, the

Conference Board of Canada, and the National Bank of Canada. Statistics Canada reported 17,000 jobs created in Alberta in February, 20,000 jobs created in January, higher job growth than in any other province, partly because this province is more open than other provinces. The NDP wants us to put Alberta into a hard lockdown, which would put hundreds of thousands of people out of work. They're wrong to do so.

Ms Notley: Wow. Mr. Speaker, I was quoting the Bank of Montreal, for the Premier's knowledge.

Now, what the facts are is this. The Premier promised Albertans jobs. He lost 50,000 jobs before the pandemic. He lost a further 70,000 during the pandemic. Last month we lost 11,000 jobs in oil and gas, public administration, and manufacturing alone. We have the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada, 240,000 people looking for work. These aren't numbers. They are facts. They are also people waiting for the Premier to deliver. There is no jobs plan. When will we see one?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it is true that she was fired as Premier because of the jobs crisis that her reckless antigrowth policies created. It's also true that we had the worst year in Alberta history in our energy sector last year, a sector that the NDP apparently wants to basically shut down. Two weeks ago Infosys announced the creation of at least 500 new jobs, 200 created by mCloud in the tech sector, 70 jobs from Neo Financial, 50 from Attabotics, 200 from Jobber, 250 in Symend. These are just high-tech jobs in one city in what is the best year in forestry and agriculture as well in our province's history.

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, in our last full year in government we created 50,000 jobs. They lost 50,000. Check the data.

Meanwhile, when it comes to facts, I love that the Premier has finally used the word "500" because today he claimed at the RMA that Infosys was bringing 2,000 jobs to Calgary. He said that over and over. The problem is that it's not true. They themselves say that it's 500 jobs in Calgary and as many as 1,500 more in other parts of Canada. Mr. Speaker, this is good news, but how can we talk about jobs when the Premier keeps playing with the numbers?

Mr. Kenney: Well, I don't know, Mr. Speaker. Has she spoken to the CEO of Infosys? I have, and they're looking forward to 500 as a starting point, as they've said publicly, and to additional job creation from that. Just this week we have had Rogers commit to 1,800 net new jobs, including 500 in high-tech engineering, high-paying jobs to make Alberta a centre of excellence. You know, the NDP keeps cheering against Alberta. That's the wrong thing to do. What do they want to do? They want to raise business taxes by 40 per cent. They want to impose a carbon tax that according to the Fraser Institute will kill 31,000 jobs, and they want to lock down our economy.

Ms Notley: News flash, Mr. Speaker: Albertans are already paying a carbon tax, just to Justin Trudeau, not to us.

Now, meanwhile the fact is that this jobs strategy is all smoke and mirrors. Let's recap. He has a jobs-maybe program that hasn't launched and will likely lose federal funding in a few days. He has half a billion dollars in walking-around money that might go to jobs but, then again, might not and a lightweight capital plan which somehow includes Keystone XL, a project that people have stopped working on. Premier, do you really expect Albertans to accept this hapless collection as a real jobs plan?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have to correct myself. I said a moment ago that the NDP wants to raise business taxes by 40 per cent. I apologize. It's actually that they want to raise those taxes by 50 per cent. That's their job-creation strategy. While we're in court at the Supreme Court defending Alberta taxpayers from Justin Trudeau's carbon tax, the NDP is cheering on the federal Liberals, who want to raise it from \$40 to \$170 a tonne, which would cost 31,000 jobs, while they attack us every day because we haven't locked down the Alberta economy. We won't listen to their job-killing advice.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to job killing, these guys don't need advice from anybody. The fact is that a year ago the no-plan Premier struck a panel for expert advice on theoretically accelerating diversification. Apparently, the only thing, however, that that panel managed to accelerate was their own corporate handout, and then they ran for the hills. Now, last week, when I asked the Premier for details on his alleged half-billion-dollar economic recovery plan, he sought permission for, quote, a margin of flexibility; put another way, to be able to make it up as he goes along. Premier, you got advice over a year ago. Why are there no details . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, while the NDP is intent on running down Alberta and spreading fear and pessimism, the experts are saying that we are leading the country in job and economic growth. Just two days ago the National Bank, a Quebec bank, said that they expect job creation to grow by 4.6 per cent in Alberta as compared to 4 per cent nationally. Why aren't they cheering that good news? Why aren't they cheering the hundreds of new tech jobs being created? Why aren't they cheering the 10,000 new businesses that incorporated last year, a record? Why aren't they cheering the fastest population growth in the country in 2020? Why don't they?

Job Creation in Calgary

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I was elected to represent Calgarians, and what they need right now is jobs. Yesterday in estimates I asked the Minister of Energy about the 1,000 layoffs at Cenovus, and she went on at length about how effective the war room is and how everyone just needs to be more optimistic. To the Premier. My constituents can't feed their families with optimism. Do you have an actual plan to create jobs in downtown Calgary? If you do, will you table it today?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if she wants to see about job creation in downtown Calgary, all she needs to do is pick up the newspaper and read about Infosys's hundreds of new jobs; Rogers wants to create hundreds of new jobs; and all of these other tech companies. The best year in the history of venture capital in our province's history, and these past two months have been the best two months in the history of Alberta high-tech and diversification. You know, why do they continue to argue against the momentum that experts say will have Alberta leading Canada in job growth in 2021? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

2:00

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I'm not talking about profits for the rich; I'm talking about jobs for Calgarians.

I would like nothing better than for the UCP to be successful with their job plans, but we have yet to see evidence of that. The Premier

has finally moved away from his absurd ESG considerations or simply a passing fad strategy, but we have yet to see any evidence of him changing course to create actual jobs. The war room, the Allan inquiry: these creations have embarrassed us, not helped us. To the Premier: will you defund the war room, cut the overdue inquiry, and introduce an actual plan to create jobs today?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, since she's talking about the Canadian Energy Centre, which is operating on about a \$3 million budget right now, clearly the reason she's annoyed by it is because they called out a French-Belgian production which depicts Canadian oil companies as wanting to kill children. The NDP is defending that, just as they are defending Justin Trudeau's effort to raise the carbon tax from \$40 to \$170 dollars. Shame on them for constantly attacking the vital economic interests of this province.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:01.

Ms Ganley: More of the same, Mr. Speaker. The Premier isn't even willing to acknowledge he's failing. He won't even acknowledge the pain and suffering that we see in Calgary.

Nearly two years ago the Minister of Energy said that she wasn't concerned that the multibillion-dollar corporate handout hadn't created any jobs. Since then we've lost tens of thousands of jobs. Premier, you ran the election on refilling those towers in downtown Calgary. When are we going to see a serious plan to do that, or are you just making it up as you go along?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, Calgarians who are going through a tough time will not be comforted to hear that from a bunch of Edmonton socialists who want to shut down the oil and gas sector, who cheered on the cancellation of Northern Gateway, of Energy East, of Keystone XL. How about the NDP stand up here and join with us in calling on the Biden administration to approve the Keystone XL pipeline and to back our efforts to reclaim that investment after it was cancelled? Why don't they start standing up for Alberta instead against our largest industry?

Budget 2021 and Calgary

Member Ceci: At a time, Mr. Speaker, when this government claims to be squarely focused on creating jobs, Calgarians saw 1,000 pink slips handed out yesterday. Calgary needs this government's support, but we saw the answer in Budget 2021. MSI, the critical funding stream to build capital, was cut by 36 per cent according to AUMA's 10-year's average for that program. That's a lot more pink slips for hard-working families starting April. To the Premier. Calgary needs your support. When will you start helping our largest city instead of punishing them at every turn?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government has made the largest infrastructure investments in the province's history, a critical part of Alberta's recovery plan. Last year was \$10 billion of investments, \$21 billion over the next three years, and over the next three years municipalities will be getting more in capital transfers from Alberta's government than they otherwise would have. The difference is this. We're actually spending the money when it's most critically needed as we recover from the COVID recession. We are investing in countercyclical job creation right now, when it's needed most.

Member Ceci: It's not accurate around MSI, but I'm an Edmonton socialist, perhaps, and I don't know what I'm talking about.

Mr. Speaker, this government can't stop nickel and diming Calgarians when they need provincial support more than ever. Nearly every decision of this government results in rising property taxes for Calgary ratepayers, and his government won't even pay its fair share for property taxes anymore as Calgary's downtown is in crisis mode following the loss of yet another head office. To the Premier: why won't you reverse your unfair, arbitrary, inexcusable decision and stop nickel and diming?

Mr. Kenney: Again, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's recovery plan makes unprecedented investments in capital building, in infrastructure, in diversification, but here is the difference. The NDP wants to shut down this province's largest industry. They can hardly help themselves. What's their job creation plan? To raise taxes on job creators by 50 per cent. I know that for the NDP and their special-interest friends they only think that big government creates jobs, but Albertans understand that we need a vital, growing private sector to do that. That's why we're attracting more investment to this province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Ceci: Alberta's largest city is struggling, but this government seems destined to keep punishing Calgarians. This government cut by \$10 million Calgary Police Service while increasing charges for forensic testing by \$2 million. This decision results in higher property taxes for Calgary homeowners as this government presides over historic job losses in the city, including 1,000 jobs just yesterday. To the Premier: how much more pain are you going to plan to inflict on the good people of Calgary?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker. They may be slightly less pained than when that member was on city council because I'm reliably informed by his former colleague the Minister of Transportation that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo voted for every single proposed tax increase he ever saw on city council and voted against every proposed tax cut. He's Calgary's tax hiker in chief. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is no secret that on this side of the House we are not fans of job-killing carbon taxes. We were against them when they were imposed on Alberta families by the previous NDP government, and we are against the one imposed on us, possibly unconstitutionally, by the federal Liberals. To the Premier: how does the current carbon tax imposed by Trudeau negatively impact Alberta businesses, families, and our economic future?

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie for the thoughtful question. It allows me to point out that this carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, is not reducing emissions. It just kills jobs, and it makes life more expensive for ordinary people to drive to work, fill up their gas tank, or heat their homes. But what is even more worrisome is the Trudeau plan to raise it, to more than triple it, to \$140 a tonne. According to a recent economic study issued yesterday, this will cost the Alberta economy 31,000 jobs. So my question is: why does the NDP support the job-killing Trudeau carbon tax?

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following on that, given that last year we found out that the federal Liberal plan was to dramatically hike the carbon tax by 467 per cent, or up to \$170 per tonne, and given that just this week a new study from the Fraser Institute has suggested that this will cost Alberta tens of thousands of jobs, to the Premier: can you explain what the economic impacts of this increase to the job-killing carbon tax will mean to everyday Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Well, according to this study, Mr. Speaker, it will cost everyday Albertans \$1,800 a year as a result of that \$170 NDP-Liberal carbon tax. It will also reduce our national economy by 2.1 per cent and our provincial economy by 2.5 per cent. Alberta's appeal court said that the Trudeau carbon tax was "a constitutional Trojan horse." Why, then, does Alberta's NDP defend it? Why are they opposed to us standing up for Alberta taxpayers and suing the Trudeau government over their carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Allow me to build off that. Given that the federal carbon tax price hike will be devastating to Alberta families right across the province, making our government's legal challenge to the carbon tax even more critical, and given that this tax has been called "a constitutional Trojan horse" by the Alberta Court of Appeal, it therefore threatens Alberta's provincial jurisdiction over resources and environmental regulation. To the Premier: can you update this House on Alberta's critical fight against the Trudeau carbon tax, please?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we won that constitutional challenge on a 4 to 1 vote out of the Alberta Court of Appeal, an historic decision which, I'll reiterate, called the federal carbon tax "a constitutional Trojan horse." I am proud that we built a multiprovince coalition to be there fighting with Quebec and Ontario, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba against that federal carbon tax. My question is this. Why do we have several provinces that have Alberta's back, but the Alberta NDP has Justin Trudeau's back? They're just wrong. Why don't they come out against the Trudeau carbon tax and support ordinary hard-working Albertans? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

2:10 COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout to Seniors

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, residents of five central Alberta seniors' living facilities are still waiting to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations, including two that are now experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. It's been reported that residents were not included when AHS initially prioritized the vaccine rollout for continuing care residents and staff and instead were added to phase 1 of the vaccine rollout, when eligibility expanded to Albertans over the age of 75. Will the minister explain this massive failure in the vaccine rollout to seniors that this government promised they would protect?

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

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we started with phase 1A, we began to provide vaccines to those who are in long-term care and designated supportive living and then those in 1B, which is going to be expanded to the 230,000 Albertans who are 75 and older. As AHS and our community partners continue to provide vaccines as quickly as we get them, let's remind the members opposite as well as all Albertans that we're only able to provide vaccines to Albertans for

the vaccines that we receive from the federal government. Of course, we want to get vaccines in the arms of more Albertans more quickly, but we are limited by what we receive from the Trudeau government.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that both sites of the COVID-19 outbreaks, Parkvale Lodge and Piper Creek Lodge in Red Deer, have gone the whole year without any COVID-19 cases in their facilities and given that the director of the lodges, including the Sylvan Lake seniors' lodge, where they are still waiting for vaccines, said that this wait is very frustrating as they were promised immunizations for residents in late February and given that the vaccine dates were cancelled for residents of these facilities, will the minister explain to residents and their families why this government has completely left them behind and put their lives at risk?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, that's fearmongering, and I'm very happy to be able to correct the member. Yes, there were vaccines that we were promised in February that didn't arrive because the Trudeau government did not give them to this province in February, and it was unfortunate. We are able to get the vaccines to Albertans as quickly as we receive them. We look forward to members opposite supporting us and calling on the Trudeau government and getting us more vaccines more quickly.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that residents in the facilities who test positive for COVID-19 must wait even longer to be immunized because they contracted the virus due to this government's negligence and given that one of the lodges expected AHS to arrive with vaccines on March 5 and then on March 11 and that that just didn't happen and given that this government still can't give these residents an answer on timing and can only tell them that the vaccine is subject to availability, will this minister admit that they have failed to protect seniors and give residents a confirmed date for their immunizations?

Mr. Shandro: What you see, Mr. Speaker, is unfortunately the NDP covering for the Trudeau government, covering for them failing to provide the vaccines to this province and other provinces all throughout February, pulling the rug out from the provinces on the vaccines that we were promised to receive in February, not getting them and continuing to not get to the proper allotment tables for the Pfizer vaccine, the Moderna vaccine, and the Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca vaccines throughout Q2. It's unfortunate. We look forward to the members opposite supporting this province and calling on the Trudeau government to get us the vaccines we need for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Education Budget 2021-2022

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I was in estimates on the budget for Advanced Education. I, like many Albertans, was looking forward to hearing answers from the minister on how students and our postsecondary system are supposed to handle nearly \$700 million worth of cuts since this UCP government took office. Instead, the minister offered up some sort of a tale of how he's relieving these schools of the burdens that were holding them back. Minister, can you explain to Alberta students and faculty how cutting nearly \$700 million in funding somehow eases their burdens?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as recipients of Alberta taxpayer dollars we owe it to Albertans to ensure that their money is being spent effectively and efficiently to protect lives and livelihoods in

our province. Since 2019 Advanced Education has worked to better align postsecondary education funding in Alberta with other provinces and to ensure that institutions are operating efficiently and in the best interest of supporting student achievement.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that students, you know, the ones that the minister said that we're easing their burden somehow, are now facing tuition hikes up to 21 per cent in three years and given that student debt is skyrocketing, the highest in Canada, as a result of this and that with all these new interest rates being imposed on the loans, they're being forced to draw at record levels, Minister, again, how is stacking tens of thousands of dollars in debt on Alberta students helping to ease their burden? Do you understand even what that burden means to our students?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, tuition in Alberta remains below Ontario and below the national average. Tuition revenue is vital for postsecondary institutions. Without tuition increases they will not be able to maintain the quality of education and services that are provided to students. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is the only one who had the call.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, and University of Calgary have been asked to absorb the lion's share of the cuts to postsecondary this year even while their enrolment is growing – two of these three institutions constitute a third of the very top research universities in Canada; not for long with massive cuts like these – and given that the minister has brushed off my questions about these devastating cuts this morning, I figured I would try one more time with more Albertans watching. Minister, how many student spaces and jobs will be cut at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that PSI grant allocations have been reduced differentially to bring per-student funding more in line with comparator institutions. Funding should be provided through a fair and evidence-based formula that takes into account the unique needs of our institutions. I know that the minister is liaising actively with institutions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The opposition had their opportunity. It's now time for Lesser Slave Lake.

Wildfire Season Preparation

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, for many across Alberta spring is a season of relaxation and savouring much warmer weather. To many who live in northern Alberta, spring does not just bring nicer weather but also the beginning of wildfire season and all the challenges that combatting such fires bring. To the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what changes have been made since the last wildfire season under your mandate to better protect Albertans and their property from potential wildfires?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Wildfire continues to review and look for ways to improve the way that we fight fires. This year Albertans will see some new tech being used to be able to help keep our communities safe when it comes to wildfires, including drones, a new wildfire app, scanners, and automated weather stations. Let me assure you that Alberta Wildfire is ready,

like they are every year, to be able to defend our communities from wildfires. Last year 99 per cent of the fires in our province were put out by 10 o'clock a.m. the next day. We thank the hard-working folks at Alberta Wildfire for their hard work.

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

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, given that there is a tangible link between effective forest management practices and reduced wildfire risk and given that northern Alberta this year is projected to have a drier than average wildfire season, which precipitates more wildfire risk, can the hon. minister comment as to any new sustainable and effective forestry management strategies being employed this year to reduce risks for Albertans?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, by using sustainable forest management practices, foresters are improving the health of our forests, which at the same time reduces the risk of wildfire. This includes focusing strategically on older trees, which directly supports wildfire risk reduction. Last year our forestry industry planted more than 100 million trees, ensuring that our forests are there for Albertans to enjoy for generations to come.

Mr. Rehn: Mr. Speaker, given that co-operative work with residents and local authorities from the region at risk from the wildfires often provides excellent insights and directions for innovations that can be used to combat and prevent future forest fires, can the hon. minister comment as to any new priorities or areas of focus that have been identified in consulting Albertans ahead of the upcoming wildfire season?

Mr. Jason Nixon: After the 2019 fire season a review was commissioned to study how we can better fight wildfire. One thing that we heard was that there was a need for better communication. Our government took that seriously and has been looking at ways in which we can better communicate with Albertans when it comes to wildfires. Just one example of that is the new Alberta Wildfire app that I mentioned earlier and the updated Alberta wildfire state map. These will allow Albertans to find out more information about fires near them and wildfire permits, fire bans, and other fire danger ratings across the province.

2:20

FOIP Requests

Mr. Carson: In estimates yesterday the first questions I asked the Minister of Service Alberta were about freedom of information and protection of privacy, otherwise known as FOIP. I asked very specific questions on why the UCP is no longer setting targets or reporting on metrics related to it in their business plan. The minister took over an hour to even begin to answer my questions and still did not answer the heart of the matter. To the minister: are you giving up on FOIP targets? Has the UCP government completely given up on any transparency? If not, will you table those targets for us here today?

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anybody that knows the Minister of Service Alberta knows that he doesn't give up. I'm not sure he knows how to say that word out loud. He's working very hard. He's working hard to keep our government transparent, and he's working hard to keep our government working more efficiently, more effectively across all ministries, with tremendous investments in IT and many other improvements right across the board.

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, given that a FOIP request sent by the CBC about Alohagate only returned seven records and given that no Albertans actually believe that there were only seven complaints over a UCP cabinet minister, several MLAs, and the Premier's chief of staff travelling abroad, to the minister. No public tracking of these requests and some seriously questionable responses going back to journalists: are you really going to claim your government is releasing all records Albertans are entitled to? Is the public actually supposed to believe that?

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do expect people to believe that because the law says that we are required to release the records when we get a FOIP request, and that's exactly what we do. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Carson: Well, given that our own caucus received zero records when we submitted a FOIP concerning correspondence on the school re-entry plan during the COVID-19 pandemic and given that while the government insisted there were no records, our MLAs had actually been CCed on many of the e-mails sent to the offices of the Premier and the Minister of Education, Minister, what do you say to Albertans that are worried that your government is hiding these documents?

Mr. McIver: You know what, Mr. Speaker? There's a FOIP process. There are people in charge of it. They do a very good job. If the hon. member wants to talk about documents that they claim to have, they should do that. I haven't heard them do that today. I can assure you, though, the FOIP system is working as it's intended to do and as it's required by law to do.

Education Budget 2021-2022 and Curriculum Redesign

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the government is failing Alberta teachers and students when it comes to the new curriculum. The latest in a long list of terrible decisions is the decision not to properly fund the rollout of the curriculum. We all know that professional development, textbooks, teaching resources all cost money. Minister, why didn't you actually budget any new money to help teachers and students with this new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I answer this question, I just want to take a moment to acknowledge that two days ago we had a terrible tragedy that occurred in one of our schools. In fact, one of our very special students, one of our high school students was killed in one of our schools. This is just unspeakable. As a mother, as a parent, I just can't imagine this type of loss. To the family, to the friends, to the school division that is grieving so deeply: I just want to extend all of our hearts, our prayers, and our thoughts. May God bless them all.

Ms Hoffman: I, too, share my sympathies, Mr. Speaker.

Given that there will be 20,000 more students enrolled in school next year and given that this government has already cut more than 2,000 educational assistants and teachers from prepandemic levels – it's in the minister's own budget – how out of touch is this minister from reality if she seriously believes that teachers can teach new curriculum without support, have more students in their classroom, and respond to the deficits that have been inflicted on students during the COVID pandemic all at the same time?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member. I know that I spent six hours in estimates answering this question, and I'm happy to answer it again for them. We've been extremely, extremely clear. We intend to make this rollout of the new curriculum very successful with the proper professional development, with the proper resources. I've indicated it is not coming out of the classroom. It is actually coming out of my budget. It has been allocated in my budget, and I look forward to more information when I'm able to roll out the curriculum.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister's own budget shows in black and white that the line item where curriculum is supposed to be funded from is cut from this year's spending and given that approximately this time last year the government laid off more than 20,000 education staff when the minister promised that she wouldn't, Minister, how can you pretend to respect teachers when you are overloading them? It's clear that you cared more about betting on Donald Trump's election victory than putting children first in your budget. Why won't you start today by telling us what the budget actually says instead of your talking points, which don't reflect reality?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What doesn't reflect reality is what the member opposite just stated. In estimates I was able to show very clearly from budget to budget that there was an increase in my department's spending. Then again, the member opposite doesn't want to actually listen to the fact that, in fact, we will have resources available to fund the curriculum, both professional development and financial resources as well. The member opposite needs to listen when we give the answer. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, order.

The member had the opportunity to ask the question, now it's the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's turn.

Health Care in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a community that's about 80,000 strong and contributes billions to Alberta's economy, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo just doesn't appear to get the fair share of support from AHS. Fort McMurray has an exciting 36 births per 1,000 female residents, which is 30 per cent more than the provincial average. Unfortunately, the community profiles inform us that my community has substantially less availability of not just pediatricians and obstetricians but just ordinary family physicians when compared to the average Albertan community. Does this government understand the importance of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and the challenges its constituents have in regard to accessing health?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that all Albertans, including those in Fort McMurray, have access to strong, publicly funded health services. There is a fully staffed group of five obstetricians in the community, and planning is under way to bring more registered midwives as well to the region. Monthly deliveries at Northern Lights last year ranged from a high of 102 in May to a low of 65 in December. These numbers are down from the previous year, as we've seen in other

jurisdictions. They're lower than three years ago, but they are higher than the provincial average, as the member points out, and we're committed to making sure the resources are there to meet the need.

Mr. Yao: Accessing health services in northern rural and remote communities is challenging. It is given, Mr. Speaker, that recruiting professionals is one of the reasons why citizens of my community have to travel approximately 56,000 times annually to attend ambulatory care services and see specialists in Edmonton according to the community profiles for Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo. What is AHS doing to strengthen recruitment of health professionals and retain these highly sought after people in this northern rural and remote community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS is always working to address physician and staffing needs and ensuring appropriate access to health services. This includes aggressively pursuing both Canadian and internationally trained physicians, reassessing the current locum situation for recruitment opportunities, easing administrative burdens, and increasing the collaboration between zones. The competition to hire qualified professionals is a national one. It's an international one. AHS continues to recruit for vacant positions and to find new, innovative solutions to attract skilled providers.

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

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is given that the ultimate indicator that Fort McMurray is neglected is that we've been gifted with only one pharmacy offering COVID vaccinations for the almost 80,000 residents while other communities within the province with a fraction of the population have multiple pharmacies offering this service and given that our province desperately needs this region to continue to work in order to provide billions to our provincial coffers, what can this ministry do to influence AHS to provide more support for this rural and northern community?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're working to get vaccines in the arms of Albertans as quickly as we receive them. There's currently a vaccination clinic on Wolverine Drive. It can do more than 350 shots per day. It's open seven days a week. Eligible folks can book online or call 811, Health Link, to make an appointment. As we expand to offer vaccination to more Albertans, AHS will be moving the clinic to MacDonald Island Park curling rink, and that will expand access to a total of 9,000 vaccines per week, or 1,285 daily.

2:30 Live Events Industry and COVID-19

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, one of the sectors hit hardest by COVID-19 has been entertainment, particularly live performances. The organizers of these vital events that would normally be ramping up for summer were told by this government that they would have clear information and guidelines by the end of February, yet recently the Premier indicated that there was nothing ready to go and is pinning his hopes on being in a better situation in June. To the minister of culture. This uncertainty is costing festivals money with every passing day. When will your government provide guidance to these organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer on behalf of my colleague. Through her office we have set up tables that are associated with the emergency operations centre, the folks in the Ministry of Health, who are helping to work and reply to the pandemic and provide guidance to many different sectors, including the one that the member mentions. We have set up these tables to continue to engage with many arts groups, performing arts and others, who have been affected by these guidelines so we can continue to give them the best information that we have and how they can take care of themselves and their patrons safely.

Ms Goehring: Given that the summer festival season was devastated last year and many of these festivals were forced to make the decision to cancel on their own without guidance from this government and given that they have had more than a year to start working on these guidelines and this theme of waiting until the last minute seems to be the way this government works, to the same minister: why wasn't planning starting to engage with organizations last year? Why are you sitting on your hands while organizations suffer?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. As we know, every country is going through this, every jurisdiction is going through trying to respond to the pandemic as quickly as we can, and that includes starting, as I said, with engagement tables, that the minister of culture has already set up, to make sure there's a direct link with the people in the emergency operations centre, to work with people who organize summer festivals so that they can understand what's going to be available if and when we are able to get to step 4 and give them proper guidance. A lot of it is going to have to do with the guidance related to crowd flow and crowd control and making sure that the patrons of these festivals can have their health . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goehring: Given that this government seems to be leaving everything to the last minute and we have yet to see a successful and smooth support program from this government related to COVID supports and given that these consistent failures are negatively impacting jobs, lives, and livelihoods throughout the province and these festivals and events are vital to a strong economic recovery and that without clear guidance we risk losing many of these events, to the same minister: will you provide us today a date when guidelines will be released or, like the Alberta jobs now program, are these promised guidelines a fairy tale?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation has risen.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to highlight some of the successes dealing with the pandemic, particularly as it relates to the events industry. Look at the bubble that we created for hockey. We have curling bubbles. You take a look at the arts. You talk about the creative arts and film and television. We are on track for a record year in film and television in the midst of a pandemic, our best year in over 20 years, better than any year under the NDP. During a pandemic. That's to the credit of our health teams working with industry to make sure our creative industries have the support they need to do their jobs.

Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society

Ms Renaud: Ministers have bragged extensively about their commitment to civil society, but this government's decision around the Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society shows exactly how little this Premier and government understand the needs of Albertans. There are only five women on the panel out of 15, and none of those members seem to have any visible ties to the disability community they'll be serving. Minister, why does this panel not reflect the people they will be serving? Do you think that women and Albertans with disabilities are not able to contribute?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, first, let me start off by saying that I'm very proud of the work that the Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society has done. They put out this tremendous report that talks about the priorities of government as we navigate through the pandemic and move towards recovery. The council has a very distinguished background. The members are very valued in terms of the advice and feedback they provide to government, and I'm looking forward to working with them as time goes by.

Ms Renaud: Given that the lack of transparency is something that we've come to expect from this government and given that the Premier's civil society council is required to disclose compensation twice a year and has yet failed to do so and given that the council has responsibility for millions of dollars in spending decisions, with no documentation of work done or funds assigned, Minister, this council reads more like a slush fund than a team here to support Albertans. Will you commit to tabling all compensation from this council today in this House and any and all work they've done to date?

Thank you.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I strongly object to the characterization of this fine council by the member opposite. The obligation to disclose happens this year in June of 2021, and that disclosure will be made. This council is not responsible for any spending decisions. Their only responsibility is to help provide advice and feedback to government, which they are doing.

Ms Renaud: Given that I know the valuable work done by faith leaders across this province but given that rather than seek to access the knowledge and wisdom of Alberta's faith leaders for the Premier's civil society council, the minister decided to appoint someone who lives in Ontario and who's a friend of the Premier, apparently, Minister, do you believe that Alberta faith leaders are not up to the task of serving on the Premier's council? Is that why you could only appoint an Ontario friend?

Mrs. Sawhney: First of all, Mr. Speaker, Father de Souza is not just a faith leader. He has so much more to him. We shouldn't just pigeonhole him. He has a tremendous business background, and he knows a lot about the social services sector. There is precedent – and the previous government did this – to bring on people from out of province to join councils or panels or a committee. There's certainly no provision in the mandate that all individuals on this council should be from Alberta. Again, I'm going to emphasize that the previous government did bring committee members from outside of province as part of their panels. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

COVID-19 and Religious Observances

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the end of March, there are a number of important religious holidays coming up for Albertans. Albertans will be celebrating Easter, Passover, Ramadan, Holi, Vaisakhi. These holidays are extremely important for their respective faith communities. However, restrictions on places of worship will significantly impair the ability of Albertans to worship during our most important religious feasts, which lacerates our spiritual health in our communities. To the Minister of Health: does this government recognize that freedom of worship is a Charter right because it is foundational to a free, democratic, and healthy society?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Peace River for a very thoughtful and important question. As you will know, I have said publicly how painful it has been to impair this fundamental Charter-protected freedom of religion, of which freedom of worship and congregational worship are obviously an essential part, but we have called on faith communities to exercise great caution within public health measures because we did see a number of superspreader events that cost many lives last year, including, for example, at the Ethiopian Tewahdo Orthodox church in Calgary and others. But we do look forward, hopefully, to moving forward soon with phase 3.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for his response. Given that this government prides itself on restrictions as a last and limited resort and given that much of Ontario now has restrictions up to 30 per cent of fire code for places of worship and given that until recently this government recognized that constitutionally protected places of worship should not be more impaired than retail and given that retail is now permitted to 25 per cent in the province, to the Premier again: with Alberta now trailing jurisdictions like Ontario in free worship, will this government recognize that these restrictions on worship are not sufficiently limited and that it could safely raise capacity for worship to or above capacity for . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to highlight that throughout the pandemic Alberta has had the least stringent restrictions on congregational worship in the country precisely because we recognize that this is a fundamental constitutional right and that any impairment for public health reasons must be a limited impairment. It must be proportionate to the goal of protecting lives and avoiding the health care system from being overwhelmed. In British Columbia, I believe, places of worship are still completely closed. They until recently have been limited to 30 people maximum in Saskatchewan. In Toronto it's, I believe, the 15 per cent capacity limit. We will take onboard the advice of the chief medical officer and, hopefully, can increase those limits safely.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the Premier again. Given that the vast majority of Albertans of faith recognize the responsibility to follow the law of the land and given that 15 per cent of fire code capacity can be onerous on faith communities in this important liturgical season, will the Minister of Health or the Premier acknowledge that although Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus, and Albertans of other faiths are called to follow public health orders,

it should not cause any confusion within government? We implore the faithful to follow the law, but the faithful pray that these restrictions are lifted as soon as safely possible.

2:40

Mr. Kenney: I absolutely agree with the member. We hope that restrictions can be eased as soon as safely possible. Mr. Speaker, we know that these impairments of congregational worship have been a real sacrifice and a huge inconvenience for faith communities. There are 10,000, roughly, faith communities in Alberta. We think the overwhelming majority of them have sought carefully to follow those rules to keep their congregants and other fellow citizens safe. We listen. We are hearing the voices of the member and faith communities and hope that we can safely move forward to gradually relax some of those restrictions.

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

Addiction Recovery Communities

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last July the Member for Red Deer-North and I were in Red Deer with our friends the mayor, our Premier, and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and announced a recovery community for central Alberta. This will greatly and profoundly bless individuals and families. It will provide opportunities to support Albertans choosing a better way, a path towards recovery and freedom from addictions. To the minister: what is the status of the recovery community for central Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question and his continued advocacy on this important issue. The recovery community announced for Red Deer is on track. We're working diligently to ensure that the project is moving forward and is moving forward smoothly. However, the pandemic has impacted these processes in ways that were unanticipated. As a result of that we do expect some delays, but we will continue to work forward on this important project.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you. Given that Albertans have received the panel's review of supervised consumption sites and given that the panel, listening to local businesses and families, reported that a fixation on drug consumption sites led to profound economic damage to local businesses and tearing of social fabric in our communities, to the minister: how do recovery communities provide a positive course correction, supporting and respecting businesses and families in Alberta's wonderful communities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recovery communities are a form of long-term residential addiction treatment that focuses on holistic recovery, addressing the whole person and overall lifestyle changes, and the programs encourage participants to become more pro-social and positively engaged citizens in their community, often gaining employment at local businesses as they advance. These facilities are poised to do wonderful things for people who are struggling with addiction and the communities that they're in.

Mr. Stephan: Given that addiction is a challenge of human nature, success requiring beginning with the end in mind, supporting and loving our neighbours to become free from addictions and given

that a fixation on drug consumption sites lacks vision and was a failure with Alberta individuals, families, and our communities suffering for it, to the minister: when will central Alberta get a recovery community to love and support our neighbours suffering from addictions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have experienced, as I said, some delays, but we are very excited to be able to provide updates on the progress for the facility in the coming months. The recovery communities in Alberta are an important part of the continuum of care for addiction treatment, and we are confident that they will support many people in their journey to long-term recovery.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period.

In 30 seconds or less we will return.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 61, the Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2021, sponsored by the hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to address the current jobs emergency in Alberta, as evidenced by the province's lagging behind other Canadian jurisdictions in economic recovery, the province holding the second-highest unemployment rate in the country, and the loss of a thousand jobs in the last 24 hours, by

- (a) committing to fully fund the Alberta jobs now program, including securing Alberta's \$185 million share of the workforce development agreements from the federal government in a timely manner,
- (b) tabling a detailed jobs strategy with cost estimates in the Legislative Assembly no later than May 15, 2021, and
- (c) committing to not exacerbating the job loss emergency by eliminating public-sector jobs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I'm certain that you have 95 copies prepared for the pages, that they will distribute.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? Peace River has a tabling.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table today, with the requisite number of copies, 41 letters from pastors and faith community leaders in my constituency from all different corners asking to safely lift restrictions on places of worship before the important holy seasons of Easter and other faith communities in the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:01 the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), and (j). At 2:01, in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Premier rose and began his statements by saying: she is annoyed because. He then proceeded to go into a fairly offensive characterization that our opposition to a waste-of-money attack on a cartoon by a company, the Canadian Energy Centre, that has clearly never heard of the Barbra Streisand effect – by disagreeing with that laughable advocacy, that we are in fact supporting a children's show that depicts evil oil companies conspiring to murder people and murder children. I think it's entirely appropriate for us to have different opinions on how political advocacy can be taking place. Disagreeing with the strategy of the Canadian Energy Centre, I think, is a legitimate position. Having the Premier tell our member why she is annoyed is unparliamentary and I believe a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a transcript, though I will, obviously, always refer to the Blues if you do already have them. The transcript I have says, and I quote, and I'm quoting the hon. the Premier: I think she's talking about the Canadian Energy Centre. I think she was, too, just for the record. Continuing with the quote:

... which is operating on about a \$3 million budget right now, clearly the reason she's annoyed by it is because they called out a French-Belgian production which depicts Canadian oil companies as wanting to kill children. The NDP is defending that, just as they are defending Justin Trudeau's effort to raise the carbon tax from \$40 to \$170.

Something they also did in question period today.

Shame on them for constantly attacking the vital economic interests of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I think – and I would agree with the Premier's conclusion – that that side of the aisle continues to try to defund the Canadian Energy Centre because their main goal is to not stand up for the energy industry and make sure that our energy industry goes down inside this province, which is probably why I would assume that they continue to stand with organizations that are against oil and gas and continue to try to sterilize our landscapes and to shut down the energy industry.

With that said, though, this is clearly – and I will refer you to *Beauchesne's* 494 – a matter of debate inside this Chamber. You saw it again today. Let me just back up. Mr. Speaker, it is rich for the Official Opposition to keep calling points of order on a very reasonable answer like that from the Premier, concerned that they feel that the words are hurting them, and then you go back to what they've said today to the Premier, told him that he was deliberately trying to take away people's jobs, that he did not like the workers that were inside this province, that he was attacking cities, the city of Calgary, that he wasn't standing up for downtown Alberta, attacking the Minister of Health today, saying that he was basically letting seniors die because they have not been able to get vaccinations from Justin Trudeau.

Now, while I disagree with their assertion on that because this Premier, Mr. Speaker, is leading what appears to be the largest economic recovery inside the country and this Health minister is on track to get every Albertan a shot by June, at the end of the day, those are matters of debate.

2:50

The Speaker: Is there anyone else that has a submission to provide new content?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. I do have the benefit of the actual Blues, not a transcript, but the Blues. The Blues read as follows:

Mr. Speaker, since she's talking about the Canadian Energy Centre, which is operating on about a \$3 million budget right now, clearly the reason she's annoyed by it is because they called out a French-Belgian production which depicts Canadian oil companies as wanting to kill children. The NDP is defending that

...

Then it goes on very similar to the Government House Leader's account of what the Premier did or didn't say.

I would suggest that this is in fact a matter of debate, but I do want to provide a caution. Over the last number of days inside the Assembly we have seen both sides of the House – as the Government House Leader pointed out, members of the opposition are saying that he or she is doing this or that. I'll also provide a caution to the government this afternoon, where it's very clear in this question that at least in this instance the Premier said that "she's talking about the Canadian Energy Centre." When we use he or she, the debate typically becomes more personal and feels much more like personal attacks. If we are continuing to follow the traditions of the Assembly in saying "the member" or "the Leader of the Official Opposition" or, in this case, "the Premier" or whatever their official title is, this will certainly add to the level of decorum. In this particular case with respect to what the Premier said, this is a matter of debate. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View during the period of Notices of Motions provided notice of motion of Standing Order 42. I would remind the member that this opportunity to speak is to speak to the urgency of the issue, not to debate the issue at hand.

The hon. member.

Motions under Standing Order 42

Job Creation

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've read it into the record already once, I will not do so again. First, pursuant to Standing Order 42 I've provided members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies. While a motion under Section 42 does not require notice, I understand that my office provided advance notice to the Speaker of my intention to introduce this motion under the appropriate standing order per the Speaker's memo.

Why is this urgent? The provision of Standing Order 42 is to provide the opportunity to ensure we address matters that are of importance to constituents that are debated and addressed in this House. Mr. Speaker, this is urgent because every Alberta family will tell you that a strategy for jobs is urgent in this province at this time. Yesterday we learned that another thousand Albertans in Calgary were given pink slips, their jobs lost, while the Energy minister responsible for the industry talked about the optimistic future.

Steady, mortgage-paying jobs are the most urgent priority of Calgarians and Albertans. Over the past few weeks the members of this Assembly have been debating Budget 2021. After many months to plan for recovery, this budget has no plan to address the second-highest unemployment rate in the country. Worse, the government is leaving money on the table. Yesterday we learned that it was dragging its feet and putting \$62 million in federal

support at risk. That money goes away, Mr. Speaker, in 10 business days, which is why it is urgent that we discuss it now.

This motion is needed today because shortly the Assembly will vote on the estimates for budget. It will decide whether to approve the plan that has no plan for jobs, the plan that will put Albertans dead last in recovery.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a crisis; 240,000 Albertans are looking for work and that number is growing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my space.

The Speaker: Hon. members, you will all be aware that notice of motion for a Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, setting aside the business for the day.

I will ask only one question. Is there anyone opposed to providing unanimous consent? If so, indicate so now.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Hon. members, prior to the beginning, the chair will outline the process for this afternoon. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented.

Members are reminded that there was an amendment introduced during the legislative policy committee meetings, so the committee will vote on the proposed amendment. The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The vote on the main estimates will then take place.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3), which provides that after the first division is called in the Committee of Supply during the vote on the main estimates, the interval between division bells shall be reduced to one minute for any subsequent division.

I would now like to invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2021-22 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Advanced Education; Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women; Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Innovation; Ministry of Executive Council; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to call now on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

3:00

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2021-2022 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Children's Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, and the Ministry of Service Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now the deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2021-2022 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries. They are the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Environment and Parks, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

I'd also like to table amendments to the following ministries that were introduced during our meetings for the Committee of Supply's consideration: the Ministry of Energy, one amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Vote on Main Estimates 2021-22

The Chair: That brings us to our next item of business, to vote on that amendment introduced during the legislative policy committee meetings. The amendment will have been identified as amendment A1. Members should have a copy on their desks.

A1. Ms Ganley moved that the 2021-22 main estimates of the Ministry of Energy be reduced for industry advocacy under reference 2.3 at page 81 by \$26,999,000 so that the amount to be voted on at page 79 for expenses is \$1,595,957,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:02 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Hoffman
Feehan	Gray	Loyola

Against the motion:

Ellis	Madu	Sawhney
Getson	McIver	Singh
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Toews
Goodridge	Orr	Turton
Gotfried	Pon	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Hunter	Rosin	Wilson

Kenney	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Rutherford	

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 26
---------	---------	--------------

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2021-22 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2021-22 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

Agreed to:

Offices of the Legislative Assembly	\$131,107,000
-------------------------------------	---------------

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates. Those members in favour of the resolutions for the 2021-22 government estimates, general revenue fund, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, please say aye.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:19 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Ellis	Madu	Rutherford
Getson	McIver	Sawhney
Glasgo	Nixon, Jason	Singh
Goodridge	Orr	Toews
Gotfried	Pon	Turton
Guthrie	Reid	Walker
Hunter	Rosin	Williams
Kenney	Rowswell	Wilson
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Hoffman
Dach	Gray	Loyola
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 25	Against – 7
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion carried]

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

I would now like to invite the hon. Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2021-22 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund, and the 2021-22 government estimates, general revenue fund.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report the 2021-22 offices of the Legislative

Assembly estimates and the 2021-22 government estimates for the general revenue fund.

[Motion carried]

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2021-22 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates, general revenue fund, and the 2021-22 government estimates, general revenue fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022 have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$65,915,000; office of the Auditor General, \$26,250,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$3,847,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$11,213,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$932,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$6,998,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$14,922,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,030,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,607,219,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$731,100,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$627,227,000; capital investment, \$13,262,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$1,384,557,000; capital investment, \$350,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$3,912,305,000; capital investment, \$547,000.

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: expense, \$225,808,000; capital investment, \$2,331,000; financial transactions, \$1,995,000.

Education: expense, \$4,906,896,000; capital investment, \$1,433,000; financial transactions, \$17,297,000.

Energy: expense, \$1,622,956,000; capital investment, \$500,000; financial transactions, \$96,970,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$556,295,000; capital investment, \$119,764,000; financial transactions, \$4,019,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$18,255,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Health: expense, \$21,755,542,000; capital investment, \$28,230,000; financial transactions, \$70,676,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$214,671,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$446,767,000; capital investment, \$1,993,913,000; financial transactions, \$21,137,000.

Jobs, Economy and Innovation: expense, \$380,010,000; capital investment, \$1,825,000; financial transactions, \$25,000,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,275,644,000; capital investment, \$18,258,000.

Labour and Immigration: expense, \$331,588,000; capital investment, \$1,102,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,703,019,000; capital investment, \$9,188,000; financial transactions, \$7,990,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$670,526,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$19,700,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$529,051,000; capital investment, \$97,327,000; financial transactions, \$5,500,000.

Transportation: expense, \$1,412,152,000; capital investment, \$1,533,845,000; financial transactions, \$114,679,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$211,096,000; capital investment, \$25,000; contingency, \$2,500,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my report.

3:30

The Speaker: Hon. members, does the Assembly concur on the report? If so, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 60 Appropriation Act, 2021

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 60, the Appropriation Act, 2021. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The bill requests a total of \$44.8 billion from the general revenue fund so that the government may meet its funding commitments as laid out in the 2021-22 government estimates.

Additionally, the bill requests a total of \$131 million to cover the Legislative Assembly's expense for the year as detailed in the offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates.

The bill also includes \$3.8 billion for capital investment, \$1.1 billion for financial transactions, and \$2.5 billion for contingencies.

I ask all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to support this bill, which will allow the government to carry on its efforts in protecting the lives and livelihoods during what is certainly one of the most difficult times in our province's history.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 60 read a first time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 59 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2021

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 59, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2021.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The supplementary amounts provided by this bill reflect a fiscal picture outlined in Budget 2021, which includes an update for 2020-2021. These amounts are necessary for the government to conduct business and fulfill its commitments for the current fiscal year. The supplementary estimates include \$1.3 billion in expense and \$750,000 in capital investment. This funding will go to the following seven departments: Children's Services; Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women; Education; Energy; Health; Jobs, Economy and Innovation; and Labour and Immigration.

The largest expense is for the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant. This funding will help small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy and a key source of employment, survive the pandemic. The tourism industry has also been hit especially hard

by the pandemic, and that's why the supplementary estimates include additional funding for destination-marketing organizations.

The estimates include funding for the Department of Health to continue to respond to the pandemic, and supplementary funding will help cover increasing costs for testing, contact tracing, incremental staffing, and overtime. It will also help protect staff and clients in supportive living, addiction, and mental health facilities as well as those in the home-care system. This bill will also ensure vaccine distribution. We promised Albertans that we would administer vaccines as safely and quickly as possible, and we are keeping that promise.

The funding in this bill will cover the cost of the critical worker benefit, a one-time payment of \$1,200 to eligible workers for their hard work providing Albertans with the care and critical services they need. Alberta's government is working directly with employers to distribute this benefit. While child care workers are among those receiving wage top-ups, the estimates also include funding for child care subsidies and supports. This funding will go towards child care rebates for parents as well as grants for providers.

The supplementary estimates also include funding for the Alberta jobs now program. This program, which will be formally announced very soon, will ensure that Albertans have the skills they need to get back to work. It will also encourage employers to create jobs, thereby stimulating broader economic activity.

Funding in this bill will support the stabilize program. As part of Alberta's recovery plan, this program provides one-time funding to support rodeos, sports, arts, and other venue-based organizations. It will enable organizations to maintain their operations and support the live-experience sector in Alberta.

Lastly, there's also a supplementary amount for crude-by-rail contractual obligations. As a result of the pandemic and ongoing oil price weakness, divesting crude-by-rail contracts has been challenging. In the meantime we are meeting our contractual obligations as they come due.

This year more than ever Albertans are in need, and the government is working hard to support them. This funding will help achieve that goal. I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to my colleagues for the opportunity to engage in debate on supplementary supply for the fiscal year that we are coming to an end on.

I have to say that I appreciate that there is a line item – the only line item for Education is related to the critical worker benefit, but of course that is important money to get out the door, a significant partnership with the federal government in freeing up those funds. I certainly wish that the government had been in a position to get them moving faster. It's been a year that we've been in this pandemic, a year that teachers, educational assistants, custodians, principals, school lunchroom supervisors – the list goes on – have all been working their tails off trying to adapt to the new requirements, expectations, and need to keep each other safe.

I was speaking with a schoolteacher recently who said that in teaching junior high, they didn't anticipate that they'd have to spend so much of their time focused on preventing students from being close to one another or being maskless or any of this when they did their teacher training nearly 20 years ago, and here they are adapting to their number one priority, to keep the safety and well-being of their students and their peers and, in turn, everyone's families and

all of our communities at the forefront. So, absolutely, we recognize the work of educational staff and how they've gone above and beyond over the last 12 months, and we will of course need them to go above and beyond as we move forward as well.

Some of the things we did quite a bit of consultation on with folks over the spring and summer and into the fall were around how we were all going to adapt to education this year. There were many, many themes that we heard, but the number one theme: we need less on our plate – that includes the number of students that we're working with – we need to be able to distance, and we need to be able to keep each other safe.

That's why in the summer before the last spring session ended – I think it was still in June – we presented a number of recommendations, 15, in fact, on how we could have safer schools and therefore successful students, and the government acted partially on one of the recommendations.

Just to sort of recap where we would like to have seen investment that was coming forward through the supplementary supply bill, because this would be the time that we would, of course, as an Assembly approve the plans of the additional spending that would be required to ensure a safe, successful school year, the number one recommendation was around capping class sizes and hiring additional staff to make that possible. Number two, relating to that, was around paid sick leave and time off to care for sick dependants. This is something that we've heard about regularly as well as the need to isolate. I would say that I don't think the government took these recommendations seriously enough, as is evident by the fact that in November all junior and senior high students, or grades 7 through 12 students, were sent to learn remotely from home, and the number one reason that has been given for that in this place and in others from the minister is the fact that so many staff were unavailable, needing to isolate, or were sick themselves.

3:40

This absolutely could have been prevented. It could have been a focus of this government to make sure that they acted in a way that implemented safety measures, including the hiring of additional staff.

Another piece was around hiring additional staff to meet the parallel and fluctuating needs of home learning. I'm sure members of this Assembly, probably all of us, have heard from families who've expressed frustration when their student needs to come home and isolate with them and essentially being told: these are the pages in the textbook that you need to learn. Not all teachers have been able to adapt their in-person learning to online for that two-week period when isolation happens, and it has been incredibly challenging for many Alberta students.

Even for those who have been able to adapt, they weren't supposed to be teaching online this year. They had opted or they were directed to teach in the classroom, and that was what they were planning on doing. For the government to fluctuate its direction and its requests of staff in such a significant way has been incredibly taxing.

Here we are in Edmonton public. Today's the day you decide whether you're doing online or in-person learning for Q4. I spoke recently to a parent who was absolutely planning on sending their child back to in-person for Q4 and then recently heard that there were 28 students in the class that they would be sending their child to and that there was a change, that the teacher had to go on leave, so this is a time of yet more chaos and fluctuation.

All the research is very clear that kids need stability. When kids feel stability and security, they're in a position to be able to achieve their fullest, right? If you look at Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, if you feel safe, if your basic needs are met, then you can

focus on learning and, essentially, self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy and the pyramid.

The government has put staff, students, and families in this situation where that hasn't been given priority this year, where we continue to see students experiencing learning deficits, experiencing social-emotional deficits, and absolutely experiencing mental health deficits, I'd say, as a result of the trauma that everyone has been experiencing during this last year.

It was also during this time last year – I think it's about a week from now – that the minister decided, after rushing the budget through the House and assuring all members of this House, all Albertans, all school divisions that budgets would stay intact and that they could plan for their transition to online and remote home learning knowing that their budgets were intact, indeed a one-eighty on that commitment. The minister instead cut funding for more than 20,000 support staff who served the students of our province.

We know that that had a significant detrimental effect on student learning. We know that students who need educational assistant support when they're in the school building need it also when they're at home trying to learn remotely. There is no logical way that one could argue that your learning needs go down when you're away from the classroom. In fact, the opposite is often the case. If we truly want students to learn at the same trajectory they were learning when they were in the classroom, they need to have additional, enhanced supports to be able to do that.

Some of the other recommendations that we brought forward were around practices and personal protective equipment. I really appreciated the comments the other day from the Member for Calgary-Cross in estimates, when he sort of walked us through a typical day of dropping his young daughter off at school. He talked about how I think he said more days than not – that was my assumption based on his words, if he didn't use that exact phraseology – they're missing a mask when they get to school. You know, kids have a hard time keeping track of everything that they're responsible for. Anyone who's had to buy replacement mittens multiple times in the winter understands the analogy here. Many days he'll have to reach in and find a backup emergency mask for his young child.

When the government did at the last minute step up and provide two masks for each Alberta student, that was again very rushed. Even though we knew students were going back to school – the government had made that decision very, very early, I think actually in June, that everyone would be going back in September – the government failed to move on the acquisition of the proper PPE required to meet that challenge. So while two masks is something that did happen, I imagine the Member for Calgary-Cross has bought far more than two replacement masks to offset that, and I imagine most Alberta parents would be in the same situation as well. That's the one recommendation the government kind of, partially, sort of implemented based on our 15-point recommendation, providing PPE to schools.

We also know that there was significant stress this year around transitions. We probably all recall the pressures around hallway time and transitioning to and from class and the pressure that was put on school staff to try to navigate that safely. I know that they did their best. I also know that burnout for many of those folks that I mentioned at the beginning, school lunchroom supervisors, has been at an all-time high, from all accounts that I have received. I would be happy to hear if the minister has facts on that. I know that the anxiety during that very finite amount of time during the day when students are taking their masks off and they're supposed to be focused on eating and having a safe lunch break has caused a lot of stress for a lot of staff and students in turn, too.

I was speaking with a mom recently who said: my daughter is a rule follower, and when she sees other kids taking their masks off and playing in close proximity, she knows that's against the rules, and it's really hard on her because she wants to report this, right? She wants to make sure that everyone is following the rules and keeping each other safe, and that's been a stigma on her and on their class.

With proper staffing levels kids would have to take less of this burden on. Kids have already taken on a lot of burden this year. They're already feeling a lot of stress and anxiety. If we would have addressed proper staffing levels in the budget or through supplementary supply, I think that this would have alleviated a lot of stress for students and staff and families.

Mental health was another area of recommendation. We recommended providing additional funding for mental health supports for students and staff by reinstating RCSD at a minimum, that regional collaborative service delivery funding. For the government to be taking those employees who are RCSD employees – they were mostly speech pathologists; audiologists; people who teach kids how to talk, how to walk, how to sit in a chair, how to function in school when they're learning; mental health therapists – and to mess with their formula, to cut their funding, and to create chaos at the same time that these staff were directed to be in the testing centres.

I know when I was tested, I'd often say to the person who was, you know, swabbing my nose or my throat: "What did you do before you were here? What was your job like a few months ago?" Every single time they were staff that worked in schools with students. They were RCSD employees, officially AHS employees, but they worked with kids on addressing their deficits to be able to support them in learning in an inclusive environment. And how do we recognize them? Well, the government decided to – I want to say blow up, but I don't want to use that language – eliminate that program, to move folks out of schools and to completely abolish the program that was in place. Restoring that funding would have been at least a step and an effort in good faith to support these hard-working men and women who did so much on the front lines and continue to do so much on the front lines. Imagine being trained as an audiologist, working with kids on hearing, and you end up spending several months swabbing noses and not even having job security at the end of the work that you're doing to keep everyone safe and to support testing.

Of course, we wanted additional support for infrastructure, the ability to be able to spread out and have more learning opportunities without having to be confined into cramped quarters. We also had a recommendation around transparency. Transparency probably wouldn't relate directly to the supplementary supply because it's simply about reporting processes and sharing all recommendations that have been shared with cabinet with all members of the Assembly and the public in turn, but the other 14 recommendations very clearly relate back to supplementary supply.

In December it was clear, after again at least half of Alberta students had been sent home for a prolonged period of time and many others had been sent home to isolate as well multiple times, that the government wasn't going to implement our recommendations. They seemed fine throwing families into chaos, having to adapt to the changes and the needs in their schools. So we came out with four additional recommendations focused specifically on the acute pressures that were being faced in school.

3:50

One of those was around rapid testing. It was clear that the government hadn't used all the rapid tests that had been acquired for long-term care and supportive living, so rather than those going

unused, in December we recommended starting to use those for rapid testing in school settings, again to address the big pressure around staffing, in particular, but also to be able to have the information to be able to properly respond to cases of COVID in schools. Instead, the government said no. But now starting just this week, I believe, two north end Calgary schools will be part of a testing pilot using those same rapid tests that we recommended in December. I can't quite call that one a half measure because there are more than 300 schools in the Edmonton area and more than 300 more in the Calgary area, but at least something's happening at two schools. Then, of course, there are hundreds of schools throughout the rest of Alberta as well, but two schools are better than no schools, I guess.

I sincerely had hoped that the government would have acted on these recommendations in the second wave or in the lead-up to the second wave. We know that the government issued a report through an auditing firm of their response to the COVID pandemic during the first wave, and at the time we were told by the government and other folks alike that this was being done to ensure that before the second wave changes could be made and we could be adapting and be nimble in response. Instead, the government still has yet to release that report, and we're definitely well through the second wave. Some are arguing that this could be the beginning of the third. I sincerely hope not. This is a very scary time and a crucial time for Albertans, but we know that there is a race between the vaccine and the variant, and we've been saying that for many, many weeks.

The government could have acted on any of these recommendations in the lead-up to the school year, which we would be voting on today in supplementary supply. They could have acted on them when they realized that things went so terribly and they had to close down for the second wave. Here we are on the precipice of what might be a third, and I really have grave concerns that parents are going to be put through the same kind of turmoil that this government put them through in March and September and November, with an ill-prepared education support system for students, for staff, and for families.

While I am absolutely supportive of the critical worker benefit allocation going out to education workers, I also have concerns that not all education workers are going to be included in that critical worker benefit. For example, lunchroom supervisors – I don't think anyone could have survived this year without having those extra hands on deck – I doubt have enough hours to be able to fully qualify for the worker benefit. We've heard from folks representing educational assistants and support staff that they expect that many of them won't qualify because of the hourly rate that they make, even though they have reduced hours and a reduced monthly contract. We've heard some concerns about bus drivers. I know that the minister says that they will be included. I sincerely hope that that is indeed the case as we move forward.

It takes an absolute village to run a school. The village I grew up in had 300 people in it. We had 300 students in the school. We had many, many parents within the community and other adults who came together to keep each other safe, and the contributions that they all made when I was a child, when we weren't dealing with COVID – there were even greater expectations on those folks this year than we had last. Indeed, even in that small rural community there were cases of COVID in schools and significant impacts to the community and to learning and to health, obviously, as the ultimate impact.

This has been an incredibly difficult year. We will have an opportunity, I hope a lengthy opportunity, to debate the actual estimates for this upcoming school year because, knowing that we still don't have a vaccine for minors, I have concerns that these challenges that students and staff have lived through this year will continue to be a challenge for them in this upcoming school year. This

is one of the reasons why it's so important that so many adults, every single adult, take full advantage, if they are able to, of getting the vaccine. It's important that we do everything we can to protect one another, including those who are minors, those who are students in our school system.

I have concerns that this supplementary supply doesn't go far enough to meet those needs. This has been a very difficult year, and we are probably embarking on yet another difficult year, and the government is continuing to download more pressures onto families. School fees are projected to go up in this budget, and it doesn't reflect the very real pressures that families have been living with and will continue to live with as we move forward.

But, absolutely, some hope is on the horizon with the vaccine for folks of certain age groups and soon moving into other classifications for access to that, but, again, students won't be part of that, the vast majority of students, minors anyway. The government should have taken this opportunity to act on our recommendations that we presented in June or the recommendations that we presented in December, and we will continue to make recommendations to make schools and communities safer.

At this point I would say that I'm inclined to support the supplementary supply, even though I don't think it goes far enough, because I think it's important that we do get money in the hands of folks who need the critical worker benefit, but I absolutely do urge the government to reconsider their priorities, reconsider who it is that actually has the opportunity to elect folks in the province of Alberta. It's not . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. chief government whip.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward the supplementary supply bill. I believe that he's put a lot of work into it and certainly has some thoughtful recommendations that he's put forward in this particular bill.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 211 Municipal Government (Firearms) Amendment Act, 2020

[Debate adjourned March 11: Ms Hoffman speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland wishing to join debate.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Really happy to be back here and have that mask off for a little bit. You know, when it comes to firearms, I think we had fulsome debate here before.

Sorry, ma'am. Is there a problem? I see members up. I'm not sure what's going on there at the table.

The Deputy Speaker: No. Please proceed.

Mr. Getson: We're good to go? Okay. Thank you.

I guess, you know, just starting my thoughts here again, there was the Serenity Prayer. I think that this kind of makes a lot of sense for a lot of Albertans right now. "God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." When it comes to firearms laws in Alberta and in Canada, I think this makes a lot of sense. I want to thank the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat for bringing this

amendment forward. Essentially, what it does is that it corrects a bit of a loophole in the system.

Now, as folks have heard us talk about before, the Trudeau gun grab is just plain wrong. In fact, back in 2019, November 27, as a matter of fact, the House here had talked about the responsible use of firearms ownership. We unanimously passed that motion. Let me just read it back into the record if I may.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize and support the ability of Albertans to lawfully and in a responsible manner own and possess firearms and to engage in permitted activities involving the use of firearms including, but not limited to, hunting and sport shooting.

This motion received unanimous support.

The members from Calgary-Buffalo and Edmonton-Ellerslie were both here at the time and spoke to it and voted on it. There were several other members that regaled their fun-loving times with firearms and family histories and everything else, and it was, to me, Madam Speaker, one of the best moments here in the House. We actually got to break down some barriers, talk about things that we commonly could enjoy, and the partisanship seemed to melt away. Quite frankly, that's been my experience with the firearms community. That's the same thing that happens when we go to the gun ranges, that's the same thing as when we go out hunting or where you go and enjoy these activities. But for some reason this now has become a divisive item.

In May 2020 the federal Trudeau government brought forward this order in council that essentially put 1,500 firearms on a list and was going to ban them. Now roll that clock forward. On June 16, 2020, we brought forward a motion that would support the rights of firearms owners again. Rather than siding with Albertans, this time the opposition chose to vote unanimously against it. I'm not understanding what the big flip-flop was. We had made progress, we had all talked about supporting Albertans, we'd done all those things, and, lo and behold, we decided to make it a political issue. Now, the whole context, apparently, of that order in council coming out was in response to an event that took place down in Nova Scotia. We have a lot more information on that event now, but, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, I've got a bit of a problem.

4:00

You see, the associate minister of gas and electricity and I attended an event out at Cardiff, and at that event – I'm sorry; I'm choking up a bit – we were there to plant an oak tree and to put a bench up in memory of one of those victims down in Nova Scotia. The problem that I have, Madam Speaker, is that as an elected official going to these events usually are pretty happy occasions. This one wasn't. Knowing that the legislation was brought forward, knowing that the work that we do in this House can't solve – we can't boil the ocean, but we can do our part. The problem that I have is that I made a promise to that family to do what I could as an elected official to help support public safety to actually prevent something like that happening. I'm not going to mention the family's name. I'm not going to mention that one lady received a text just a couple of hours before her sister was shot by someone who never should have had these in the first place.

The response from the federal government was so disingenuous to bring out an order in council to ban firearms from law-abiding owners and citizens and not get to the root cause, not get to the issues, ma'am. Now that we've seen, you know, this new C-21 come out – and Bill C-22, which ironically actually reduces minimum sentencing for firearms violations – it didn't just take the 1,500 firearms. It ended up going to something as silly as paintball guns, paintball markers that fire beads of paint down range. It went so far as to ban airsoft guns, pellet guns. Nothing that was in there

fixes the problem, nor is it going to stop more benches or oak trees being planted in memory of gun crime victims. It does nothing.

We can't even unify here as two parties to come up with something to push back. We've been asked to stand up for Albertans. We're doing it. We can't do it together because this becomes some political football. They're worried about their voter base, ma'am. Do they not realize, again going back to that motion that we made back in 2019, that that was one of the unifying points, and that was honest and genuine. I believe that represented Albertans right there. It didn't matter if you were a socialist, if you believed in capitalism, it didn't matter if you were a Liberal, and it didn't matter if you were an independent. What matters was that this is something that we as Albertans value and enjoy, our property rights, our freedoms. We honestly believe that in the hands of law-abiding citizens, you should have these rights and freedoms.

This bill, this C-21 that came out, does everything against that, and we could not get on our motions coming forward – we could not get – support from the opposition. What I'm really hoping for here today is that this bill that was brought forward closes a loophole, where in C-21 the federal Liberals are saying that municipalities should have the right to ban handguns. That it was clearly identified, that it's within federal jurisdiction on firearms. The Municipal Government Act is clearly within the wheelhouse of the province. This will correct that.

We even went so far as to have a firearms task force that was put in place to listen to Albertans. We had nearly 40,000 applicants that came in and did our surveys. We had a couple of big town halls, you know, given that with COVID we couldn't go out and talk to folks like we normally do, and we heard rhetoric coming from the other side, ma'am, that it was in an echo chamber. It couldn't have been further from the truth. About 25 per cent of the people on that call didn't even own firearms, but they were expressing their concerns. The majority of them, 70, 80-ish per cent depending on which stats you look at, understood that the key principles behind this were about rights and freedoms and doing the right thing, making sure that if you have a background check that's run through a police system every single day, you should be allowed to have these. The time and ability that lawful firearms owners have: it's a privilege, absolutely, and it's an absolute right.

The canary in the coal mine is that I can take your property right now regardless of whether you're entitled to it or not. I can make some innocuous bill and an order in council in the dark of night, if you would, to bring out some piece of legislation that sets precedents on so many different levels and then to even go further, to go and overreach your authorities. We have issues right now that are taking place with manufacturing facilities. The RCMP is going back on the firearms reference tables. They're literally undoing precedents that have been set.

Bill Blair is talking about having this nice thing that's evergreening. It's not evergreening; it's ever darkening, meaning that they keep adding to the list without even going through council. You can literally take things, take away people's rights and freedom, devalue their property, and overnight make them into criminals if you do not comply. Is this Canada? Does this sound right? Put it in context with anything else other than a firearm. Get off that position and understand what is happening.

Bill 211. People are pushing us, telling us: "What are we doing to stand up? What are you doing, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, to stand up and push back?" As a Canadian citizen I'm even being criticized by some saying: well, this isn't in your wheelhouse; it's federal. Well, darn it. Last time I checked, I'm aligned to that country, to those flags, those colours right up there. I am a Canadian. I'm an Albertan. I'm also getting lots of feedback from people across the country, and they are so proud and so happy that

Alberta is standing up. Saskatchewan is doing the same thing. I get people all across the country getting it.

Honestly, ma'am, I hope the opposition gets it. I really hope that they go with us today, that they really vote like they did back in the fall of 2019. Do justice to the Albertans, do justice to the Canadians, do justice for their constituents, for what we stand for in this country, the ideals and the freedoms, and ensure that those rights are still maintained, that we maintain our orders and laws and that we respect those rights and freedoms. I really hope that they step away from the rhetoric. I understand that they may have different views on a ton of things, but you can tell how passionate I am about this because I was the person sitting there saying what I could do to help prevent something else from happening, from planting more trees.

The problem is not lawful firearm ownership. All the bad guys are going to keep doing bad-guy stuff with all the stuff that they already have. They don't go down to Cabela's. They don't go down to Phoenix gun range. They're not getting their stuff from there. They're not taking the background checks. They're not doing the screening. They're not putting the trigger locks in place. They're not joining the gun ranges. They're not practising safety protocols. They don't go through and get their possession and acquisition licence. They don't take the courses. They don't do that, nor will they start.

When it comes to handguns, most people are from white-collar backgrounds that live in an urban setting. That is your largest percentage of firearms owners when it comes to handguns. When you go into the shotguns and the rifles, the largest percentage are blue collar, usually rural. But there are lots of folks that span both. So when you talk about your voter demographic, I really strongly encourage you to think about that. The same teachers, the same doctors, the same lawyers, the same public-sector workers, the same good brothers' union hands, brothers and sisters have these. They enjoy this. It should not be partisan. I want you to consider it because for a lot this is the wedge issue, and it's not a wedge issue for the blue team. I'm imploring you to put all that other stuff away for a sec. Please consider what's in front of us, the precedents, what is taking place utilizing these certain types of property. I really want you to consider that and help us out here.

The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, I thank you so much for bringing this forward, and I implore the Assembly to vote in favour of this bill so at least we can hold on to a fraction of a hope that the country we all love and care about will remain strong and it will stay as we know it and not watch slowly slip into the toilet bowl.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

4:10

Ms Glasgo: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, I know Standing Order 29(2)(a) is used as a question-and-answer period with other members, and having served with the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland on the Alberta firearms advisory council, I would like to give him the opportunity to elaborate. He mentioned the planting of trees. I know that we had a very fantastic stakeholder on our Alberta firearms advisory council by the name of Rick Hanson. He's a former Calgary police chief. He gave us a really in-depth background on how illegal firearms are coming into the country and the ways that we actually could curb gun violence and gun crime like what happened in Nova Scotia. I know that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is well versed in this as well. I was wondering if he could elaborate, for the benefit of Albertans and the Assembly and the opposition, about measures that would actually enhance public safety, not just superfluous

orders in council that do nothing but attack law-abiding firearms owners. I would like to hear what the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has to say because I think he's a great voice of reason on this. I would resign my time to him.

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

Mr. Getson: Well, to my colleague from Brooks-Medicine Hat: thank you so much. Thank you for your guidance and stepping up and chairing that committee and establishing so many really good Canadians and Albertans from great backgrounds and depths, you know, inclusive of, she mentioned, former police chief Rick Hanson. He did give us a line of sight, and it was interesting to have that perspective from a law enforcement officer.

The biggest issue that we have with the gun grab is that they're potentially spending billions of dollars on the buyback program. Now, when you look at a limited resource – we just talked about, you know, Committee of the Whole, and we talked about the estimates right now – they're going to spend a couple billion dollars on this versus spending tens of millions of dollars on the Canadian borders and customs, actually giving resources to the people that need it. You're going to go run around and do this letter-writing campaign, basically, and claim victory that you're garnering all these firearms and taking them off the street, but you're not going to, and you ignore the group. You're giving them pennies on the dollar, if you would, of actually addressing the issue.

Mr. Hanson had also mentioned that it's interesting when it comes to the major urban centres such as Toronto. You know, the safety minister – I'm trying to remember his actual title – from the feds: his background, too, was law enforcement. But the way that he garnered and he looked at the numbers that were coming in was that essentially he had his officers trolling the papers. They would look at the obituaries. They would look at the estate sales. They would go troll these, and then they would talk to the families or whoever didn't want these, and then they would say that they claimed victory and took X number of firearms off the street. Well, that's pretty easy. That's pretty sloppy. We have some members here that are former police officers, and I know their work ethic. They sure as heck wouldn't be acting like that. That was kind of a surprise to our former police chief in Calgary as well.

The other thing is that they know that the border crossings – you know, 80 to 90 per cent of the firearms that are coming across the border are coming from the U.S. There are certain choke points. They know exactly where they're at. But they're out-gunned and they're out-manned. Quite frankly, again, they don't have the resources.

We also talk about the mental health issues. A bunch of these folks – and now you've got this pipeline of firearms coming in going to the bad guys because they're worth two to three times the amount in the marketplace, because anyone who does a background check actually has to go through it and do that. The ones that don't, that bypass the system, can get this. They pay a premium for it, so there's a market now. You're creating a market for this. Then taking the time to go through and do the background checks. To give the RCMP officers, to give the social workers, to give people that are involved in those cases to actually follow up: that would be money well served, again pennies on the dollars. A pound of prevention – or is it an ounce of prevention? – is worth a pound of cure. I'm not sure how the saying goes. Something like that, the order of context. You get a larger return on investment for investing in the front and getting to the root cause. That's probably the biggest thing.

Former life: if I had a pipeline strike and it was a Hitachi hoe that went out there and somebody broke into the plant site that was

locked down at night, they jumped on this excavator, grabbed it, started digging out there and blew up a gas line and killed 20 people, if I as a general manager or a senior manager on a project that had that happen, if my root cause analysis, my safety evaluation was to go down there, witness this, and then my recommendation would be to ban Caterpillar backhoes, it's the same context. It doesn't get to the root cause. Again, the law enforcement community is against what's being proposed by the Liberal government. They're against how they're addressing it. They've identified and the police union as well has identified that this does not solve it.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 211 in second reading? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is always an honour and a pleasure to speak in this fantastic House here. I'm honoured to be speaking on Bill 211, the Municipal Government (Firearms) Amendment Act, 2020. I really want to thank the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. She has done an amazing job. She's a good friend of mine, and she has brought this very important issue to the Assembly.

You know, for many Canadians responsible gun ownership is a virtuous part of their lives, and in many cases it's their heritage. I can certainly speak to people from my community. We recognize the community of Fort Chipewyan, which is the oldest settlement in western Canada. It was the place where the first trading was occurring during the fur trade, and a big part of that were these weapons that were used to hunt animals. This was their livelihood, and to this day there are still people trading in things like furs and pelts who rely on guns for their livelihood. Sadly, though, for these Canadians this is going to have to change possibly due to the federal government's very ill-advised and poorly researched decision to penalize our law-abiding gun owners, as if they were criminals performing acts of gun violence through our communities.

It's amazing, the virtue signalling that comes from our Prime Minister. Though I'm sure his intents are well – I mean, no one wants gun violence – he certainly has a way of targeting the wrong people. At the same time, he certainly demonstrated that he wishes to reduce fines and penalties on people who are using weapons in his areas, in the cities, and that's interesting. You know, with this notion being portrayed by the Liberal government, that the law-abiding gun owners are the citizens responsible for the senseless gun violence across the nation, the actual gun violence issues, backed by factual data provided by law enforcement, get further ignored.

Labelling groups like Alberta's responsible, trained, and licensed gun owners as contributors to the nation's gun violence problem is simply dishonest, deceitful, and it's misguided. In addition to these misguided claims by the federal Liberals, how can they even claim to be attempting to tackle gun violence when, again, they're simultaneously passing legislation which shortens the sentences for criminals guilty of smuggling illegal firearms, which are the most prominent weapons used in Canadian gun violence? It is just mind-blowing and astounding that we have someone leading our nation who thinks like this. It's so disheartening, and it's really sad that there are so many people who support this man.

Therefore, in order to protect these citizens from virtue-signalling legislation out of Ottawa, our government, Alberta's government, needs to put Bill 211 into practice. With the federal government's legislation giving municipal governments in Alberta the power to pass laws in order to catalyze the prohibition of legal firearms, the danger is that municipalities that favour the federal government may impose these unfair laws on responsible gun owners. If Bill

211 were to come into practice, the legislation would protect Alberta's law-abiding gun owners from out-of-touch Liberal gun policies that do nothing more than punish law-abiding gun owners rather than many criminals using illegal firearms illegally acquired from American vendors.

Again, we can look to our statistics here in Alberta, and gun issues regarding firearms use for hunting and sport shooting are not the issue. It's the gang violence that comes out of Vancouver and Toronto, quite honestly, where we are seeing a lot of these illegal weapons being brought in and used. It's very disappointing to see such broad-stroke legislation that impacts so many and does little to actually effect what it hopes to achieve. That's the federal government for you. But, again, thank goodness for the good member, my good friend, from Brooks-Medicine Hat on her common-sense bill.

Personally, I would like to hear our federal Liberals explain the sense behind their legislation to my rural constituents in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as they haven't even considered the diverse lifestyles outside of cities like Toronto and Vancouver. The reality of living in rural, northern Alberta requires individuals to use such weapons, such tools to hunt to provide for their families and also protect themselves and their assets.

4:20

Up in the north I had a bear use my front yard as a toilet this year. What a mess that was. It also rummaged through the neighbourhood and took out a lot of garbage cans. Now, in the city we're just going to call bylaw or law enforcement to help address this issue. Fish and wildlife eventually comes in with their pens to attract those bears. I'm fortunate that I live in a secure community with lots of supports there, but I think about residents in my communities of Fort MacKay and Fort Chipewyan. Now, these are communities that are mainly indigenous peoples, indigenous citizens, and they very much rely on their weapons and very much need them to do things like repel wildlife. For many who live in cities, they might find that hard to believe, but it is a reality.

They also very much enjoy using those weapons to take down wildlife so that they can eat it and do their traditional way of life and skin those animals, use those pelts for furs and for blankets or decoration. More importantly, they're using the meat. They're eating the meat, and I've been blessed to break bread with my indigenous communities and eat some of this meat cooked on an open fire. It's fantastic. There's a pride for that one individual who did take down that animal. It's important that we promote that and don't discourage that.

If we look at it further, deep into it, the amount of gun violence in these communities is very rare, yet they're going to be impaired from owning these weapons, and it's going to lead to a negative in their lifestyles. I certainly hope our First Nations brothers and sisters do speak up on this issue because it is very relevant to them. Quite honestly, we do have a Prime Minister who states that he is willing to listen to our First Nations and respects them, so it'll be interesting to see how he addresses that should they approach him.

Outside of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo there are many regions across the province that are covered from horizon to horizon with pastures where farmers tend to their livestock. These farmers do need to protect their livestock. There are a lot of predatory animals like coyotes and wolves. Even here in the city of Edmonton right now on the radio they're talking about the coyote issue, of coyotes going into the urban areas to dig through garbage and whatnot. It's only a matter of time for those coyotes. One of them inadvertently will attack somebody. It's just a matter of time. Statistically it will happen. We're going to need someone to support capturing these animals, hopefully humanely, but if push comes to shove, someone

might need a weapon to address that. It's one of those things that we just need. It really deals with the fact that it's the person who is using that weapon that is the issue; it's not the weapon itself. It's not the gun itself.

If farmers need the guns to protect the livestock, then we understand that they also need to use them to protect their animals from predators. If they were penalized by the federal government for being law-abiding gun owners, how do we expect them to protect their livestock from those animals that they have out there when they're a hundred kilometres away from fish and wildlife, when they're out in the sticks all by themselves? You know, it's tough. I mean, will the federal government expect them to simply erect a scarecrow or something like that or yell abrasive comments, like the NDP do with us, at these animals? Give them harsh warnings? No. That's not the way.

This piece of legislation passed by the Trudeau Liberals causes exponential room for confusion and unintended law infractions. With over 352 different municipalities in Alberta alone, having the potential of a mosaic of different firearms laws right across our province puts law-abiding gun owners at risk as they travel between the municipalities in the province. For example, an Albertan gun owner could be conducting restricted firearms training at a certified range, but as they leave and drive to a different municipality, it suddenly could be considered criminal to have a rifle in their possession. This is going to really convolute the process and make it very difficult and demonstrate that we're perhaps not a united province.

With Bill 211 Alberta's government does want to protect Albertans from this legislation that could cause unclear boundaries leading to unintended law infractions by normally law-abiding citizens. Additionally, this will make the job of our hard-working law enforcement officers across the province clearer as it'll eliminate the potential for an assortment of different laws that our peace officers have to navigate as they address the various issues.

Over the last decade within Canada and the United States we have seen many attempts to stop gun violence to protect citizens, but the reality is that issuing legislation that establishes gun-free zones or revoking firearms from individuals always leads to the same conclusion, that law-abiding citizens will follow the law and won't be able to protect themselves. Meanwhile we have folks who follow the criminal element and have illegally accessed and acquired weapons, handguns, weapons that can be concealed, and they do not hesitate to use them. That's very unfortunate. We have to deal with rural crime, which really ramped up there a couple of years ago. We need people to have protection, unfortunately, because even our law enforcement is sometimes unable to protect these folks in a timely manner.

It's obvious to see that this piece of legislation is more likely to prevent a hunting trip between a grandfather and a grandson than it is to prevent someone from using an illegal gun, participating in an illegal drug trade. It's questionable. If the issue of gun violence does need to be addressed, it's obvious that the problems aren't the guns. The problems are rooted with the individuals who hold those weapons. It's at the whim of what their intents are, which is sometimes to cause violence. If the federal government really wants to address this issue diligently, they will pass legislation which addresses the issue of the smuggled weapons and the gang violence and the use of those in committing crimes. I think that is something that many Albertans and Canadians would support.

Madam Speaker, thankfully for Albertans, Alberta's government is very capable. We have an insightful Firearms Advisory Committee that is chaired by the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat, who has brought forward this bill to ensure that Albertans are

provided with common-sense gun legislation rather than being punished by the out-of-touch, virtue-signalling legislation by the NDP's best friend in Ottawa, Prime Minister Trudeau.

Alberta's government knows that Albertan gun owners have gone through proper and thorough screening and training, which entails a full character investigation by police and firearms safety exams to acquire their firearms acquisition certificate. I do hope to go through this process this year myself because I do live in a northern community. I have many friends that do hunt, and I wish to join them in these adventures. I have had experiences where I've had that inadvertent confrontation with some wild animals, which only led me to run, but, boy, I wish I had something else alongside me there, admittedly.

Alberta's government knows that Alberta gun owners will be responsible and will do proper, thorough screening and training. Furthermore, if an Albertan has a restricted weapon, and further police checks, registrations, even a police permit for transport to a shooting range is required, they will accept those regulations. With these checks in place and with these law-abiding gun owners following them thoroughly since their implementation, our provincial government knows that these responsible citizens are not the problem and that the confiscation of their legally purchased – legally purchased – private property is simply wrong and approaching tyrannical levels of government overreach, that we wish to avoid in this great province where we champion individual freedoms.

With that, Madam Speaker, I stand in support of Bill 211, and I encourage all my colleagues to do the same as it brings common-sense legislation to protect the deserving rights of our many law-abiding gun owners. It limits the potential for confusing and inconsistent gun laws and protects the established lifestyle of so many of my constituents.

Thank you.

4:30

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, any other members wishing to join the debate on second reading of Bill 211?

Seeing none, would the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat like to close debate?

Ms Glasgo: Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you, and thank you to all members, on both sides of the House, who have offered insight and perspectives from both your constituencies and your own experiences to second reading of Bill 211. I just want to say again how grateful I am as a private member to be able to be moving this bill and using usually government-related time when we have so many things going on in our province and so many important pieces of legislation to move through this Assembly. I just wanted to thank the Premier again as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs for allowing me the opportunity to do this.

I'm excited to be moving into Committee of the Whole, of course, Madam Speaker. I mean, I wouldn't want to presuppose the outcome of the vote in this Assembly, but hopefully in Committee of the Whole, should we get there, I'll be able to answer some more questions thoroughly from the opposition and any members on our side of the House as well.

But I think what we really need to remember is that this is common-sense property rights protection for Albertans. This is a preservation of a way of life for many as well as an assurance for our own constituents that Alberta respects the rule of law and respects the long-enshrined property rights of those in this province.

I know that on the Alberta Firearms Advisory Committee we did have even members of industry who are manufacturing firearms – actually, we have quite a thriving manufacturing sector here in Alberta – so this isn't just about, you know, the guy who wants to go to the range; this is also about people's livelihoods as well. Our government is committed to focusing on lives and livelihoods throughout this pandemic.

I will say that having the opportunity to be a big part of this and having an opportunity as a private member to bring forward this legislation has been truly humbling, and I do look forward to continued debate on this as well and answering questions in Committee of the Whole should we get there.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'd like to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a second time]

Bill 55

College of Alberta School Superintendents Act

[Adjourned debate March 15: Member LaGrange]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak to Bill 55, the College of Alberta School Superintendents Act. There are many things that parents, staff, and families have asked this Legislature to address as key priorities when it comes to education. This isn't one of the key priorities that I have had raised with me by those stakeholder groups that I mentioned. It would be great if the government were bringing forward a bill that acted on any of the things that they were taking out of their current business plans.

The business plan that used to be in place for Education, even under this UCP government last year, was 11 pages, and now it's essentially two. The number of goals and targets and objective measures that were in the business plan related to safe, caring, and inclusive schools have all been eradicated. If the government wanted to fulfill their prior commitments on safe, caring, and inclusive schools – and I appreciate the minister's remarks today in this place with regard to the horrific situation that took place in Leduc at a high school earlier this week. I think that focusing on safe and inclusive schools would be a good area for the government to focus a piece of education legislation on right now.

[Ms Glasgo in the chair]

Or perhaps they'd want to focus on enhancing supports for students who have severe disabilities through legislation, putting a piece of legislation in place that actually articulates what kind of supports and the fact that inclusive education is indeed a right for all Alberta students. That would be a great place for the government to focus some of their efforts. Given that it seems to me that there is legislative time given priority for education, those would be some bills that would reflect some of the things parents are asking me for the government to act on.

The bill we have today is about the College of Alberta School Superintendents, and I have to say that while this hasn't been a key priority for many stakeholders, I am always happy to debate legislation as it pertains to education. Having been trained as a teacher and then later becoming a school trustee and later the board chair for Edmonton public, I had five years of a close working relationship with superintendents for Edmonton public, two of them, as well as engagements with many other superintendents through other professional development and association work that

we did, specifically thinking about ASBA and PSBA as two of the member organizations we were part of.

At those gatherings the priority of making CASS a separate college wasn't raised as the highest priority for education. Superintendents regularly raised questions and concerns and continue to, as I continue to engage with them, around insurance, around staffing, around transportation. These are a number of key priority areas for them in their educational leadership as areas of focus. But the minister has brought this bill together, and we certainly will give it due consideration.

Some of the questions that I have – I always like asking questions in second because it means that there are several opportunities for the minister to respond to them, and I really do hope to receive more information, either directly from the minister or through other members of the UCP caucus, in response to these questions. I'm going to sort of try to walk through them methodically and have a bit of rationale to them so that answers can be written and provided either in writing in this House or verbally through other points in the debate.

One of the first ones that sort of comes to mind, having worked with many colleges in the role I had as Minister of Health as well – many, many colleges – is that colleges are self-governed typically. They have some public members, and it definitely is the intent for there to be one public member for this board. There's still lack of clarity on how large the board itself will be. But the boards themselves are governed and are funded by their members. This is quite a small group of members if it is indeed capped at superintendents, associate superintendents, and the highest level of exempt leadership staff working in district offices.

I believe that right now CASS receives a grant from the government of Alberta for \$750,000 every year. Typically there aren't grants, though, for colleges because, of course, if you're self-governed, you're self-financed. You have your own obligations to your members, and you're not beholden to your funder, being another branch. You're an independent association. The question is around: where is this \$750,000 going to come from? Presumably, the government won't be funding CASS any further. I guess the question would be: can we get confirmation of that, that this won't be something that government is funding? Can we get confirmation that this is indeed going to be truly self-governed and that there won't be, other than the one public member, an expectation that there be a relationship between the government and the college?

When I think about \$750,000, there definitely are fewer members that would be eligible to be a part of CASS in the way it's being presented in the package that we've received through the minister's public remarks and briefings publicly on this matter. How much is the expectation that dues will be for members of CASS? Will the dues only be for the members who are voting members, or are there other members who have optional membership, as outlined in this bill? Will they as well be expected to pay dues even though they're not voting members? They're more there in an associate sort of fashion.

Those are some concerns and questions that have been raised: the relationship with what has been traditionally the funder, who the funders will be moving forward, and what those dues will entail. Arguably, CASS is going to do more under this legislation than they have been doing currently, so what is the expectation on their overall budget, and how will those dues be allocated down to its members?

4:40

I definitely have those questions as well as questions around the budget, around who it is that's going to be paying the dues. I know that some superintendents have written into their current contracts

that their association dues are paid by the school division, by the employer, but of course the employer gets money to meet the needs of all students, so we wouldn't want to see excessive dues be taken out of board allocations that are supposed to be passed on to students. We talk about that often in this place. Ensuring that the allocation that's given to the district goes to the classroom and not towards paying association dues would be a big concern for me, and I would love to get clarification on that matter from the minister or designate.

There is one area that I think the minister and the communications team anticipated would come up, and that is definitely the question around school leaders. In the public-facing documents that were released, there is a reference that the act "will apply to superintendents, chief deputy superintendents, and other eligible teacher leaders employed in central office positions, in school jurisdictions across Alberta" – and I'll be happy to table these tomorrow or pass along the link to *Hansard* – implying that this isn't for school leaders, people who are principals, assistant principals, department heads who have teaching assignments in schools.

When I tried to tease that out a little bit, it seems that in 17(1)(c), which is on page 13 of the hard copy, a teacher leader is defined further under the Teaching Profession Act. Of course, there would be a conflict if somebody was a member of both the teaching association and the college, so making sure that there's that clarity – and I believe that through the communications documents that were created, there is a desire to leave principals and school leaders as part of their current association but move central exec staff into CASS. We definitely would want to see a commitment to that through the actual legislation rather than just through the regulations under the Teaching Profession Act.

I'm working on an amendment in that regard and sincerely hope that the government accepts it in good faith or even puts forward their own amendment. Sometimes that happens. The government will hear an idea from the opposition and decide to put forward the amendment on their own. I would support that. I'd be happy to vote for an amendment that clarifies through legislation – not through regulations but through legislation; regulations, of course, can be changed very easily or through ministerial orders even more easily – the commitment that the teaching profession will be part of one association and that the College of Alberta School Superintendents and its members will be part of another association, that there won't be dual membership between both the teaching association and the College of Alberta School Superintendents association, that you're a member of one or the other, and that those who work in schools, because they're teachers, because they're teacher leaders, including principals, assistant principals, and department heads, are part of one association, not part of CASS.

That's something that we plan on working with Parliamentary Counsel on to give that clarity. If we are to take the communications documents and the Q and A that happened in response to those for what's being printed, I think that that's the government's intent right now. I would really love to see that enshrined in law rather than something that is at the point where it could be interpreted differently through a change in regulation or a ministerial order. That's definitely one piece that I would love to hear some response from government members with regard to.

So far my question marks are around budget, cost, and who's going to be paying those fees, ensuring that that money doesn't come out of school allocations, that that money is directly paid by its members to its association costs or its college costs. That has definitely been the case in education. I recall visiting some of the college offices and seeing their charts tracking how many people had paid up their dues and who was paying next and when the timelines were to ensure that all of the folks who were part of the profession were in good order

and that that wasn't funded directly from the province of Alberta and making sure that there's that clarity between the professional association for the college of school superintendents and the association for teachers, that there not be dual membership. I don't think that other than – the only situations I can sort of think of are firefighter-paramedics, where you are doing two different professions for one employer. I don't think the profession of being a school leader is a parallel to being in two different associations, so making sure that there's that clarity.

Again, there are many bills that I think parents would love to see come forward in this place. I think many of them would focus on sustainability for education, making sure that students, disabled students in particular, have the supports that they need to be successful, making sure that we are addressing the education gap that exists between high school completion and postsecondary participation, supporting a smoother transition, and supporting students in their quest to acquire a full range of knowledge to be able to support them through their lifelong learning and their employment and further professional development. I think all of this speaks to an opportunity we have to work together to bring forward legislation that would ensure that we have opportunities to support students, to support schools.

I definitely look forward to having an opportunity to bring forward some amendments and to receiving responses to the questions that I think are fair and brought here with respect around the financing and the membership of CASS as we move forward. I think that superintendents provide a significant service to the people of Alberta. Not many school leaders have an opportunity to become a superintendent, but it is something that is certainly an honour and a distinction in the province of Alberta.

It isn't something that you get a specific certificate in. When I think about some of the health professions, paramedics, for example, have a specific skill set that they study in postsecondary for. Nurses, LPNs, and RNs have specific skill sets that they acquire, specific training, and a certificate that accompanies that. Dental hygienists, for example – their college was one that I had the honour of working with quite a bit – have a specific certificate, and then that qualifies them to be part of the association. Same with teachers: you get a teaching degree and a teaching certificate, and that becomes your membership in that association.

To be a superintendent, you need to have a teaching certificate, you need to have a master's in something – it doesn't even need to be in education – and you need to be hired. Those are sort of the three criteria. You're chosen by your local board to become that school leader, or if it's a private or a charter school, rather, I guess you're chosen by the organization that runs you rather than the public, Catholic, or francophone elected boards. Different people will have different educational backgrounds and different work experience.

But I appreciate the call to having some consistency around professional development once people are in those positions, to being able to support them as being the chief employee of a board but also the chief educational leader for that entire district. It's a huge honour and a huge responsibility. The same for associate superintendents and other district leaders: their expertise and their desire to continue in lifelong learning, I think, deserves to be celebrated and honoured.

Again, the questions remain, though, around budgeting, reporting, and membership because I think that there are some very big loopholes potentially in place in this bill that could very easily change the membership significantly through small changes, an order in council or regulation. I certainly hope that that's not the intent of this government or any future government. Obviously, when we pass a bill, the intent of the mover today matters, but the

actions of the people in positions of power down the road also matter.

I think for us to do our best in this place to demonstrate a desire to have the bill match the communications documents – I think we have a real opportunity to bring forward a few very focused amendments and answers to the questions that have been asked to ensure that all Albertans see that we are indeed committed to ensuring that educational dollars don't go towards funding a professional college and that membership indeed be separate between those who are teachers and teacher leaders and in-school leaders and those who are part of CASS. I think that those are the two main areas that I really wanted to focus on in this bill in particular.

4:50

Again, I appreciate having an opportunity to debate an education bill. I sincerely hope that the next one is focused on closing some of the learning gaps that have been created, in particular over the last two years, through the decisions that have been made around funding. I think that we would be wise to bring forward a bill that demonstrates a commitment to the people of Alberta for adequate funding to meet students' needs, sustainable and predictable as well, but "adequate" really needs to be the first word that we refer to when we talk about budgets and when we talk about supporting students and their learning and their educational goals.

I think it would also be beneficial to superintendents if this place was focused on the work we do to set up fair policies and fair funding models to ensure that all students have an opportunity to succeed in our school systems. That, I imagine, would be something that superintendents would be very excited by.

Today it's about their college, so I want to recognize that they have been wanting this, I imagine, for a while, and I want to again state that generally I'm supportive of the idea, but I do have those very big questions that remain around funding and membership. Specifically, I don't think that Alberta students should be paying for the operations of a college. If it is indeed an independent college, I think it should be funded independently, but of course it will be expensive to run a college when it has, arguably, not a huge number of members. So the breakdown on the number of members, what the fee schedule would look like, and how this will be allocated without addressing education budgets, I think, is key and is at the forefront of some of my concerns as we move forward.

At this point I want to encourage all members of the Assembly to support Bill 55 in second reading so that we can get that additional information, ideally in second reading, but if not, in committee, and we can consider these amendments to make this bill, in my mind, stronger and more responsive to the educational needs that we have here in the province of Alberta.

This has been a day of considered debate on a few different issues. I'm grateful that we have the opportunity to share ideas and work to make the province stronger.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. As an individual who was part of a professional association for most of my working life, in my case the association of registered social workers, I'm always interested to see what's happening in other professions and the movement toward creating colleges that are intent on ensuring the well-being of the recipients of services in particular areas like social work or, in this case, schools. So I'm happy to address a few things, and I do

have a few questions. Some have already been pointed out a little bit by the previous speaker, but I may make reference to them. I have a few other things that I'm just hoping the minister will have an opportunity to address as we move on.

As with the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I do have some concern that given the priorities that people share with us as MLAs in this province, those kinds of things are not being addressed. Instead, we are moving on to the smaller issues when we would certainly love to be in this House talking about the very serious concerns in the schools. I know that in my regular call-in through the community, including last night, I often have very long conversations with people from the school system, who have, you know, a long list, because I start with a really wide open question about: tell me about your thoughts or concerns. It doesn't take me long to identify people in the teaching profession because they certainly have not felt supported, not felt that their professionalism has been the focus of this government. They've not been provided the resources to do the best work they possibly can for the benefit of the students in their school, whether it be for COVID or whether it be for class size or whether it be for taking care of their own personal needs such as their pension plan so that they can feel comfortable and focused on their school work rather than the stressors created for them by the provincial government. I just want to put that out there, that I think that education is seriously neglected by this government.

But let's get back to this particular bill and some of the questions that we have here. I think that the question that was brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora regarding who is covered by this bill is one that really needs to be highlighted a little bit more because, you know, we have some very serious concerns about the intention here of this bill. I'm really hoping the minister will take some time to come in this House and speak to us about the purpose of gathering this particular group of people together and whether or not it's going to include people beyond the superintendents and the deputy superintendents. If it is that group, it would seem to make some sense given that the scope of their work is very similar and similar from board to board to board and therefore would make a reasonable collegial group to draw together to ensure that practice at this level in this nature of work is conducted at the highest possible level that we can expect.

But it does seem curious. The government seems to be suggesting that it's not just the superintendents and the deputy superintendents, as suggested by the title of the bill, the College of Alberta School Superintendents Act, but they're suggesting that some 1,300 managers would somehow be involved in this. Clearly, therefore, it is not just superintendents and deputy superintendents and it may include people who are not, in fact, part of the administration, the central school boards, but, rather, part of the delivery of services in schools such as principals and vice-principals. I think that we certainly need some clarity on that.

I'm worried that the underlying intention here for the government is not about providing good practice but separating out groups from the ATA because of their conflict with the ATA. They can certainly allay my concerns around that by identifying that principals and vice-principals that are in the school system doing front-line school work as opposed to part of the larger administration at the school board are not included in this legislation. I look forward to having the opportunity to speak with the minister during Committee of the Whole.

I am also curious as to who's not included in this particular piece of legislation in that I notice that the focus is on public, separate, and francophone schools. I do not see any reference to individuals who have the supervisory or the superintendent responsibilities in private schools included in this legislation. Perhaps the minister can

help me to understand if that is indeed the intention. If I am wrong, I would be happy to be given some instruction on this.

But I am concerned that there's been a fair amount of emphasis from this government on shifting resources from the public systems, whether it be the Catholic system or the public system, into private school systems, yet it's not including the private school systems in the body that would be responsible for governing good practice within those systems. You know, if there is a standard of good practice, if there is a code of ethics, if there are regulatory responsibilities for the superintendents in the public and Catholic school systems and the francophone system, then of course it would make sense that it should also be true in the private system. They're all receiving government funds, they're all responsible for the education of children in our system, and therefore I would really like the minister to spend some time helping us understand why they don't seem to be included in this legislation. The question is: who's in and who's out of this legislation?

5:00

I also have some concern about a decision that appears to be part of this legislation, that while the body that is being created, the CASS, will have some responsibility for disciplinary actions for their members, which is true of all professional associations that I know of – they do have internal disciplinary committees. They have rules that are clearly outlined about what they can speak to and what kind of hearings they can have and what kind of outcomes they can apply. In this one particular case, seemingly outside of the normal pattern for these sorts of bodies, the government seems to be determining that while the disciplinary committees of the CASS could determine whether a superintendent was guilty of a serious misconduct, they cannot actually suspend or revoke the professional certificate of that superintendent. Rather, that can only be made as a recommendation to the minister.

Now, I point this out because that is a variation from standard practice in all other professions in this province. If you are a psychologist, for example, or if you are a doctor or if you are a nurse or if you are a social worker, your professional association has not only the right but the responsibility to pay attention to your practice and to ensure your practice is consistent with good practice in this particular field, and they have to have, by legislation, a set of rules by which they will govern that practice and a set of rules by which they will examine complaints of misconduct, including the application of appropriate acts such as requests or demands for further education or some other kind of activity, including up to suspension of their participation in the body in question, whether it be, you know, the professional nurses association or the, in this case, College of Alberta School Superintendents association. I just would love the minister to come forward and to explain why there is this odd exception in this particular case and just provide us some justification for that, because it doesn't seem to have face validity as to why some of them want to do this.

I would certainly like to know whether or not the CASS will be responsible for ensuring that the superintendents remain consistent in their behaviour with the professional code of ethics that is presently used by the ATA. Having removed them from the ATA, I would assume that they are no longer responsible to the ATA requirements and therefore no longer following the particular list of the code of ethics as defined by the ATA and instead would be replaced by something else. Does that mean there is responsibility for this professional association to either wholly adopt the ATA code of ethics or to design their own code of ethics specific to the members of their community? This is unclear in the legislation here. I just really want to be clear that we understand what kind of responsibilities this board will have for supervising good practice

and what role they have in ensuring that that practice is adhered to and what role they have in applying consequences when that behaviour steps outside of the code of ethics or the responsibilities of the person in that position.

[The Speaker in the chair]

If the minister could at some point, when they have an opportunity, perhaps during Committee of the Whole, come back to help us understand why this board is being set up in a way that is slightly different than other boards of a similar nature and help us to be sure that we understand that indeed these members, while being separated from the ATA, are not somehow being freed up from the responsibilities that they had while they were members of the ATA or at least are responsible to a similar set of code of ethics and practice requirements. Perhaps some of that will be defined later in regulation, but the minister certainly would be thanked for providing us with that kind of information.

I also just want to know a little bit more about the requirements for the members who are participating in terms of ongoing education and practice and would like to know whether that will be established by this board, or will that be established by the minister? It seems to be that the minister has a role here that they don't normally have, so I just want to know who's defining good practice. Who's defining what ongoing education is, and what responsibilities do people have to demonstrate to this committee, this board their fulfillment of all the obligations?

I look forward to the opportunity to have these kinds of conversations in the future with the minister, and at this time I would seek an adjournment of debate.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 59

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2021

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and to speak to supplementary supply today. I think there are a number of things that I would like to raise with respect to this matter. Probably one of the biggest is with respect to the concerns of my constituents. We're all sent here to represent various people throughout the province. In my case it happens to be Calgary, a city in which I've pretty much lived my entire life. The concerns of my constituents tend to be centred, particularly right now – obviously, everyone is concerned about their health, but I think that on a day-to-day basis people are really worried about jobs, they're really worried about costs, and they're really worried about their kids.

This pandemic has been, I think, a strain on us all, and it's a strain in many, many ways. You know, we're not around each other the way that we once were around each other, and that's difficult for most people. I think that makes us all a bit more reactive than we otherwise would be, and that makes everything we experience a little bit more stressful. Particularly for those with children, this pandemic has been very difficult because of the unpredictability. There's very little that's more difficult for folks than unpredictability. Every time a child gets a cough, every time they're exposed to someone in a class, suddenly they're staying home. The same is true of kids in daycares. The same is true of preschools. It's sort of all over the map. That's challenging for people to deal with.

At the same time, we really are seeing a jobs crisis in this province. We're lagging behind significantly in Alberta, which is

not the position in which we normally find ourselves in terms of jobs or economic growth. That's a big concern to people, and that is probably top of the list of priorities of things that my constituents want addressed. Certainly, a lot of the factors that have impacted that are outside of the control of government, but there are some things which are within the control of government.

5:10

Certainly, I think that the members opposite have recognized this as well. When we talk about jobs, a lot of that has to do with attracting investment, and attracting investment – well, the challenge we've had with investment here in Alberta is that a lot of large banks, a lot of insurance companies, a lot of sort of major investment places are kind of having concerns, ESG concerns, and those concerns are environmental, social, and governance concerns, and some of those concerns are not exceptionally well founded.

Of course, you know, people have the right to make their own decisions, they have the right to make them for whatever reason they want, but actually we have very good and strong ESG here in our energy sector. What we haven't maybe done historically is always a great job of communicating that. I think that for years it was ignored, and then there were attempts made to prove to the world over the course of a four-year span that Alberta was taking these things seriously and to demonstrate to the world just how good our record was and just how much our government and our companies were doing to improve that record. Unfortunately, we have seen sort of a return to the days of old, where we're not doing a good job of communicating again, where instead of working with people to demonstrate to them that their concerns are factually incorrect, we are attacking them and name calling them and doing a whole lot of things that really just don't advance our cause very effectively. So that's another big concern.

At the same time, we're seeing huge concerns around costs. You know, I've spoken a lot in this House about the sort of increase in income inequality and the effects that that's having. It really is beginning to have effects because the cost of so many things is going up and the cost of sort of wages of middle-class and low-income workers is not keeping pace with that growth. People's lives become more and more difficult. The cost of insurance is going up, the cost of electricity is going up, the cost of housing is often going up, and there are all these little costs associated as well with the pandemic that are going up for people, so that's a big concern for people.

Municipal taxes also are going up because of decisions that this government has made that are impacting people throughout the province. The withdrawal of MSI, the downloading of police costs, the cutting of police funding: these things are having an impact because someone has to pick up the cost, and that someone is municipalities. Municipalities can't run deficits, so what they do is that they increase taxes because that is the option they have available to them. In Calgary this is particularly difficult because of the emptiness of those downtown towers. We're not seeing nearly as much come in from business taxes in those areas, so that is in turn having to be shifted onto businesses that are either further out or onto residential individuals. So that continues to be a huge concern as well.

I think that my biggest concern with this is what we don't see in here, which is to say that we don't see, really, much to address any of those things, much to address people's concerns around their jobs, in terms of attracting investment, in terms of diversifying our economy, in terms of doing the things that are necessary to kind of modernize our economy and recognize the position we're in so that people can get back working.

We have an incredibly smart and talented population here. It wouldn't take a lot on the part of this government to help that out. In fact, the government has recognized it. They talk about how tech had a banner year in 2019. Well, yes, tech did have a banner year in 2019 because job growth follows programs that are meant to incent that. In 2017 and '18 the NDP government did an enormous amount to attract those companies, so we saw that boom in 2019. They talk about how that fell off in 2020. Well, yes, it fell off in 2020 because in 2019 the UCP government cut those supports and cut those investments and cut the very things that were attracting those businesses. That's definitely a concern.

We also don't see anything in here to address my constituents' concerns around costs. We don't see anything to offset the increased costs of municipal taxes, because this government is downloading costs onto municipalities, who have no other recourse. We don't see anything to deal with electricity costs that are increasing on my constituents. The government certainly has allowed insurance rates to skyrocket, which is a challenge again. We see all these little costs going up and up while at the same time people's income is remaining stagnant or even decreasing because of incredibly high unemployment rates and unemployment rates that are remaining high. Certainly, we're going to see some of that recover, but, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to see employment rising back up to, you know, 2018-2019 levels until 2024, until after the mandate of this government. So that's a big concern.

We also don't see anything in here to deal with their concerns around their kids. Certainly, like I've said, it's stressful. It's stressful to have this unpredictable situation where you don't know if your kids are going to school on any given day. You know what would make that a lot better? Smaller cohorts, because smaller cohorts means they're in contact with fewer students, and fewer students means less self-isolating. That's a pretty big deal.

Of those, I would say, top three concerns that my constituents have, there is absolutely nothing in here to address any of them.

Mr. Nally: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nally: Standing Order 23(b), you know, in terms of relevance. I certainly appreciate the comments. I just haven't heard anything about second reading of Bill 59 at this point and would certainly welcome those comments. But at this point we haven't heard anything relevant for the last five minutes.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would have to disagree with the Deputy Government House Leader in this case because I have been listening with interest to my colleague's comments. We're debating the supplementary supply bill, which asks for additional funding for the year that we are still in for another 10 or so days, and I've heard the Member for Calgary-Mountain View talk about the types of spending and investment that her constituents would like to see from this Legislature and from this government. Those would be things that would be in the supplementary supply. That they are not, I think, is an important matter of debate for this Legislature to consider. In my estimation, I don't believe there's a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: I concur. There is no point of order.
The hon. the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Debate Continued

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Carrying on, as I was saying, my concern again with this bill is primarily not so much what is in it as what is not in it, which is to say those things which would address the concerns that my constituents have in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we sort of see funding continuing for a number of initiatives – well, the war room for one, which was certainly something we attempted to cut from future years – that are not helpful. Again, as I was commenting, I think one of the big concerns we have here is not just that we're failing to maybe spend money to attract investment but that we also appear to be spending money to repel investment, if you will. I think that that's quite problematic as well because, again, you know, if I had to list the top three concerns that people in my constituency have, it would be certainly around the pandemic but also around jobs, around costs, and around kids. All of those things, I think, are incredibly concerning.

5:20

I think as well that we've sort of seen the government drag its feet, shall we say, on a number of investments that the federal government is making that could certainly go to support individuals. Certainly, one of them was benefits to front-line workers, that additional money. You know, they've made the program difficult to understand and difficult to apply for; it's been delayed for a really long time. That's money that could have gone not just into those people's pockets, but as we know, when we're talking about lower income workers, they are significantly more likely to spend that money in the local economy.

That doesn't just support them; it supports small businesses, and it supports their fellow Albertans who work at those small businesses and who run those small businesses. So that as well is a big deal. You know, when we come out the other side of this pandemic, I don't want to be in a world where small businesses have disappeared, where it's nothing but large corporations sort of on the landscape. I think those are very big and very legitimate concerns, and I think that they're not addressed.

When we see a government coming forward asking for a large, large amount of additional money but that large amount of additional money isn't going to address the concerns of Albertans, I think that's problematic. You know, certainly, we have seen some increased spending with respect to health. I don't think that that's necessarily a bad thing. Obviously, no one is going to claim surprise that the costs of the pandemic have increased that budget line item, so I think that that is all legitimate.

But I do think that, you know, we're in a position where we're – what? – now 10, 15 days out from sort of the end of the year, and we're dealing with a situation in which we have federal funds that haven't been utilized yet. I think it's a legitimate concern. Now, hopefully, the federal government will roll that money over, but I don't think there's any way to state with certainty that that will definitely happen. I certainly hope they do.

You know, we are seeing some investment, most of it again coming from the federal government, that will go to support Albertans. For instance, there's a significant amount of federal money flowing through to help clean up orphan wells. I mean, that's pretty much good on every side of that, but we're not seeing investment from the provincial government on that. Certainly, the money flows in, and it flows through the budget, so it's relevant in that sense – it's in last year; it's in this year – and I think that that

economic stimulus is very much helpful, but it's not coming from this. That is my point, Mr. Speaker, that we don't see the things which Albertans are most concerned about in here.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen for a brief question or comment.

Mr. Getson: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of it is just to be able to get up and take the mask off and stretch my back. You ever notice that? We sit in here so much, listening to other people talk and, you know, keep engaged, but, my gosh, I'm not sure what the heck is going on.

What I like is fresh air. I like being outside, I like talking to people, I like understanding what drives our province, and the other thing I get a kick out of every once in a while, Mr. Speaker – and I'm sure I'm going to weave it all together here – is memes. Every once in a while you get these memes. They flash up there, and the one that came up that was the most relevant that came to mind – I'm sorry; it's been a couple of long nights; we've all been going through estimates – was this one meme where there's a person standing there with this fork in a socket, and they're actually suffering from electrocution. They're getting shocked up. What there is there is that right beside there's an even bigger fork, and there are about 10 people strapped onto this one, and they're running towards the bigger socket, and it says: socialism, if at first you don't succeed.

What I'm hearing is a complete pontification on wondering why downtown Calgary is having problems with their office towers, wondering why all these jobs disappeared. We're sitting in here, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View – I love the area we're at, by the way. I love seeing the Eskimos go down there and whup the Stamps out at McMahon Stadium and driving over afterwards. Great little area. A lot of folks that I know from there work downtown, have got small families. Usually project engineers, that type of crowd, maybe on the banking side or the project controls, et cetera, and predominantly they work for – yeah, you bet – energy companies. The same member was talking about us and the Canadian Energy Centre fighting back against misrepresentation of that entire sector, and they can't come to reason why – why – these jobs are leaving. You've got to be kidding me, me with my sore back.

A lot of people in Calgary are pretty sore at you folks over there, too, for not getting the picture of what you've been doing with the energy sector for a number of years. You can't have it both ways, friends. You can't keep saying that Alberta is the worst in the world for services. You can't keep blocking pipelines. You can't keep – I don't know – protesting and saying nonstop or not standing up for what we're doing here on the energy sector. If you want the wealth and you want the value to come back, that is one of our largest sectors.

Why do we have to counter this? Why do we have to get the narrative out? Why do I have to stand up and stretch my back? Common sense perhaps, maybe common sense for Albertans. They have to understand that we're diversifying the economy. Get fired up about hydrogen, folks. Don't start getting fixated between green hydrogen and blue hydrogen. You've got to go with what we have. In 2018 Japan does a study right across the world. They're going to switch to a hydrogen economy. In 2018 they come up with the blue hydrogen column, so that'll be the one coming from fossil fuels, utilizing things like carbon capture, that, by the way, we're a leader in, going to be leading. We are down in the lowest – the only one that beat us for the best cost price point was Russia. Now, Russia beat us because they don't have to worry about, you know, the environment or humanitarian rights, so I'm okay with being number

2 in the world on that. Green hydrogen, Mr. Speaker: we're in the lower quarter percentile.

These are the types of things that we're working on to bring it back. You've got the tech. We've been told nonstop: you've got to diversify, diversify, diversify. If it isn't a windmill spinning and a solar panel, they don't count it. We've had conversations about artificial intelligence before. I don't want to go back to that hit reel, but, holy crow, you're right. We do have a lot of artificial intelligence. We have a really good community that's working on that. We've got ingenuity that's coming in place in the aerospace sector. I've got electrical engineers, I've got coders, I've got mechanical engineers doing skunk-works-type projects that are going to be taken there. Next thing you're going to hear about is the Arctic strategy. Guess what, folks? The Cold War isn't over; it just went on pause for a while.

So when you're pontificating about these jobs and what's going to happen, maybe sit down, have a good conversation with us over a nice cup of Joe, and I'll explain to you the rest of how the province works.

Until then I'm going to give you some more time, and I'll sit down.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I did provide a cautionary tale at question period today about speaking through the chair. You might say that they might like to have a cup of Joe with me. But I think that a reminder for us all to speak through the chair will add to the level of decorum.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for that. New back here again this week and pretty fired up on that dialogue, obviously.

I would offer that if they, being the opposition members, and if we could drop some of the partisan stuff that takes place in here, to your point on the decorum, actually sit across the table and understand that we're not so different – we're not so far apart inasmuch as offers have been made before by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to go out and help me engage with community leaders. I would offer the same, for him – sorry, Mr. Speaker; I'm messing that up again – for members opposite, whichever MLA or representative or jurisdiction they're from or constituency, to maybe come out to God's country. It's just on the border of Edmonton, where they border us. I would definitely sit down and have a coffee and a conversation and drop the partisan stuff that's taking place here because what's happening with all of that: we get fixated, and we're tearing ourselves apart. We've got to start fixing it for those people down in Calgary-Mountain View because they need some jobs to feed their kids.

The Speaker: Fortunately, that is the end of the time available for 29(2)(a).

Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always enjoy the chance to debate in this House. Sometimes it's a little hard to follow a speech based on memes, mansplaining, and lack of self-awareness, but I'll do my best as I go along here.

You know, I have been very carefully following what's been happening in the Committee of Supply and what's been going on in Bill 59 here. I must say that I continue to have some very serious questions about the priorities of this government as demonstrated in this bill, and I have questions in a few areas that I wouldn't mind the government at some point addressing for me if they get an opportunity to do that.

On some of them, you know, I have very serious concerns about sort of the lack of preparedness and the lack of thoughtfulness in putting this together and the desire here to actually help Albertans with the very difficult circumstances that they've been experiencing over the last year. I certainly wish the government would focus on that instead of on making trite points to repeat back in the bar and slap your buddies on the back and joke about.

5:30

I think that, you know, we have some very important things that have been missed by this government, and taking some time to point out, you know, the deep gaps in their preparation and thoughtfulness in putting together this particular bill I think is really important for the people of the province of Alberta. For example, here we are with just – what is it? – about 10 days left in the month, and the government is now just applying to bring in money from the federal government to put toward job creation, that they're supposed to spend somehow in the next 10 days.

Now, of course, they may be rescued by Prime Minister Trudeau in this case. They have been rescued by him in a number of cases, in particular with COVID, but I would have hoped this government wouldn't be depending on the federal government to make things better for Albertans when they themselves are not doing so. I'm very discouraged to see that they're waiting so long to create a program to create jobs in this province. I certainly hope, as the previous speaker from Calgary spoke to, that somehow they get the grace to spend this money after the appointed date, but I'm discouraged that the government is putting themselves and the citizens of the province of Alberta in this place.

I'm also concerned about the whole nature of the lack of focus on jobs. I mean, this is a government that came in saying that that was going to be one of their top priorities. They said that it was going to be jobs and pipelines and the economy, and we know that they have not gotten a pipeline, although the Prime Minister has bought one for them because of the hard work of the previous government. We know that their economic record is one of the worst that has ever been seen in the province of Alberta when you take measures like unemployment and so on. We know that they simply are struggling to balance the budget. But what they said with all of these things – the first two they had complete failures on – was that they were going to do something about jobs. Here in this budget I'm really not seeing the work that needs to happen with regard to jobs.

One of the things that we have learned through this pandemic, which has caused a need for this supply bill, Bill 59, which I am speaking to very directly – I want to say that one of the things we have learned is how important some jobs are in this province that we sometimes don't give full credit to. For example, a year ago not many of us would have understood the depth of the importance of personal care aides in long-term residences. We often see them as jobs taken by immigrants just temporarily while they get themselves grounded in the country and then move on to what other people might consider more important jobs. But some of us always knew that those jobs were important jobs, that people who become personal care aides are actually performing a very vital function in this province. It's only risen in our eyesight over the last little while because of the pandemic, because we know that when those people are not fully supported in their jobs, the consequence is disastrous, even including death.

You know, it's something nobody in this House, on any side of this House, would ever want to have happen, the death of an Alberta citizen that could have been avoided. We all share that. We're on the same page on that particular one. I'm very concerned that this government has not taken a lesson from that and applied for some

extra money here in this House to ensure that things could change for those kinds of workers.

Now, one of the things that we do know is that over time a significant number of major employers in this province have made a shift in the nature of their employment of their staff, and that shift involves reducing staff hours to a point where they no longer need to consider staff members full-time employees. Instead, they can consider them part-time employees. What happens when they do that is that they save some money because they don't have to provide benefits and pension plans for part-time employees the same way they need to provide them for full-time employees. So that's a saving for the corporation that is hiring.

But what we've learned in this pandemic is that that has caused a serious problem for the employees. Now we have people who would be more than happy to work full-time hours and would expect, in working those full-time hours, that they would achieve from that work all the benefits of being a full participant in the economy of the province of Alberta. For most of us, that includes the desire to be able to fulfill our needs and the needs of our families in a stable and dependable way, not only through our working career but in the time of our retirement, and that requires that we have plans that allow us to work full-time, that allow us to have benefits to take care of our teeth and our health care and take care of us when we need to take sick days or to help people in our family, take time off work, and ultimately take care of us when we retire with a benefit plan that is reflective of the significant contribution that we've made to the province of Alberta.

Now, that's just a standard desire on the part of most people in this province. They would want to have all that. But what we have learned in this crisis, this pandemic crisis, is that a significant number of people are in jobs that do not provide all of that. What this government has failed to do in this Committee of Supply is to provide the support and resources to the employers to ensure that the people working for them can have a job of that nature. Instead, what we have is people getting what are referred to as contract positions now. So you're not considered an employee anymore; you're considered a contract worker. Therefore, you're not eligible for benefit plans. You're not eligible for pension plans. You're not eligible for paid sick days so you can take care of yourself or your children when they become ill.

The government has seen all this. The consequence for us was that we had people who were working in four or five different long-term care settings in order to be able to get enough hours to do all that on their own as contract workers as opposed to full-time employees. They're actually working full-time, but they're not getting any of the benefits that society has to offer for people who devote themselves to the well-being of the province of Alberta with full-time effort.

This government could have used the Committee of Supply to actually move ahead on that, to address the needs of workers in this province, to deal with the profoundly problematic existence of precarious work. I don't see that expression once in this bill. I don't see that expression anywhere in the work of this government. I'm very discouraged that the Committee of Supply isn't actually primarily focused on dealing with precarious work, on helping people to achieve what is natural for all Albertans, an opportunity to work hard, to provide not only for their family but for the well-being of all the province and the growth of the economy.

We know that people come from all around the world to do that in this country, to take that opportunity, to be able to contribute deeply to the well-being of this province, yet the rewards they get for doing that, often for having gone through very difficult circumstances in other countries to arrive here, are that they are treated as less than. They're not given the full benefits of being full-time workers. They

do not get the benefits of having jobs that actually contribute to the well-being, even the life we now know, of members of the province of Alberta.

5:40

That's what we could have seen in this bill and what we don't see. We don't see the government taking jobs at the core of their efforts to move forward. We don't see them saying: because we believe in jobs, we will define what a good job is, and we will help employers get to the place where they can provide those good jobs.

Now, we know it's a big problem in this province, this precarious work. The number one employer in this province isn't actually a large corporation. It is small businesses, and small businesses are in a very difficult place. I've been speaking with many, many, many small businesses for quite a while now as head of our caucus's Alberta's future program.

I know that the previous speaker said that we should get onboard with hydrogen, but I'd like to remind him that we had our hydrogen report up before they had their hydrogen report out, and he can go to albertasfuture.ca to actually read that report if he'd like to, along with many other reports about how we're going to diversify and build this economy. After this government came in, they didn't work on diversification. They actually cut a lot of the tech funds and other diversification initiatives that were in place under the previous government, so they really have no claim for working on diversification. They are late to that game and not doing it very well, by the way. But I certainly encourage them to go to albertasfuture.ca and learn what they could have been doing. We are more than happy to provide good ideas to this government.

I think the focus should have been on jobs and helping those small employers, small businesses to be able to retain their employees by providing them with full work experiences, which is one of the major problems right now. Every small-business person I have spoken to – and I am literally now in the hundreds at least, perhaps thousands if you include everybody who's participated in our consultations, of small-business people who are absolutely wanting to provide the best experience for their employees, who often view their employees as members of their own family, who have been devastated by having to let them go or to reduce their hours because of the shutdown in this pandemic, but they cannot compete with the big companies. They can't provide what those employees need.

This was a chance in this bill for the government to come forward with a package that would allow that to happen, with a package that would say to small employers: I know you only have 10 people, but let's make sure those 10 people are devoted to your company and will stay with you and not leave you because they can get more money, more benefits, and better pension plans at a bigger company. We need those small mom-and-pop shops, we need the small welding shops, we need the small pet food supply stores, we need the flower shops, we need the yoga studios because they hire people in this province. But they can't do so if they don't get support for working with their employees to provide them a full work experience that includes the things that small businesses cannot presently provide. I certainly would like to have seen this bill, Bill 59, have done that. They have failed to do that, as they have failed to do so much else for the citizens of this province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, and there is approximately one minute remaining in time allotted for debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford getting up and

providing us, you know, a wholesome analysis, more than just commenting on memes that they happen to see on social media and anecdotal information that you collect in a coffee shop. Although those are really important, it's really important to be able to hear from people directly . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 59 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Are we moving on?

The Speaker: To adjourn.

Member Ceci: Yes. Let's adjourn. Thank you.

The Speaker: Till tomorrow at 1:30?

Member Ceci: Till tomorrow at 1:30.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has moved for adjournment till tomorrow at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:46 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	4085
Members' Statements	
Advocacy for Alberta's Oil and Gas Industries	4085
Private-sector Labour Relations	4085
Recall Act	4085
Cancer Care and COVID-19	4086
Energy Industries and Alberta's Economy	4086
Community Organizations	4086
David Ennis Parole Application	4086
Economic Downturn in Calgary	4087
La Francophonie Albertaine	4087
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	4088
Oral Question Period	
Job Creation	4088
Job Creation in Calgary	4089
Budget 2021 and Calgary	4089
Federal Carbon Tax	4090
COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout to Seniors	4090
Postsecondary Education Budget 2021-2022	4091
Wildfire Season Preparation	4091
FOIP Requests	4092
Education Budget 2021-2022 and Curriculum Redesign	4092
Health Care in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo	4093
Live Events Industry and COVID-19	4093
Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society	4094
COVID-19 and Religious Observances	4095
Addiction Recovery Communities	4095
Notices of Motions	4096
Tabling Returns and Reports	4096
Motions under Standing Order 42	
Job Creation	4097
Orders of the Day	4097
Committee of Supply	4097
Vote on Main Estimates 2021-22	
Division	4098
Division	4098
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 60 Appropriation Act, 2021	4099
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 59 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2021	4099, 4110
Bill 211 Municipal Government (Firearms) Amendment Act, 2020	4102
Bill 55 College of Alberta School Superintendents Act	4107

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

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