



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 22, 2021

Day 88

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 22, 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 interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

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

Ms Elhard:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, please welcome guests of the Minister of Service Alberta, members of the Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Racism and Religious Intolerance

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, but we were just reminded that hate rears its ugly face all too often. Yesterday afternoon two Muslim women in hijabs were disgustingly attacked in Calgary on the basis of their appearance. My heart goes out to all of the women who have been the target of hate-motivated attacks. I wish to recognize the good Samaritan who stepped in and the Calgary Police Service for making an immediate arrest.

This was not an isolated incident. In past months racialized Albertans, mostly women, have been the target of bigoted attacks for no reason except for their backgrounds, their religion, or their ethnicity. This must stop now, Mr. Speaker. Racists have no place in our province. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Albertans are welcoming and tolerant, and that is reflected in every aspect of this great province.

My Alberta was built by hard-working families from every culture, ethnicity, and background, and it will continue to do so by Albertans from diverse backgrounds. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send a clear message that those who want to play a part in building our future need to embrace our pluralistic society and take an active role in creating a province that is welcoming for all.

There are dangerous consequences when people promote hate. That hate, whether verbal or physical, is an attack on all of us, our diversity, and our freedoms. Recently there was a Confederate flag that was raised in a Calgary cemetery. To those responsible, shame on you. To any person who gathers on our Legislature Grounds or anywhere else, for that matter, to promote hate or discrimination, shame on you. To anyone who supports the bigoted attacks on women, shame on you. Racism and religious intolerance are a stain on society that needs to be eradicated. When it comes to combating racism, you can either get onboard or get out of the way.

Thank you.

Government Policies and Emigration from Alberta

Member Irwin: Alberta's greatest resource is undoubtedly its people, but what does it mean when we're losing that resource? The numbers are out, and for the third quarter in a row more people are leaving our province than entering it. So why are Albertans leaving? Let me share just a few stories.

Dianne, my constituent, is headed to Nova Scotia. She fears the UCP has done irreparable damage and is most concerned about their attacks on the environment, workers' rights, pensions, and a move towards further privatization. Terry shared that her son is leaving for B.C. this week. He's a red seal electrician who doesn't see a future in Alberta, personally or economically, and Terry plans to be right behind him. Amanda was born and raised in Calgary and has been there for 40 years. Amanda and her husband have had enough, and they're moving to B.C. in June. These are just three short stories, but I could share so many others from folks who point to a wide range of reasons why they want to leave: attacks on health care, a lack of affordable child care, destruction of the environment, cuts to postsecondary education, a lack of support for the arts, and even racism. People are telling me that this isn't the kind, loving province that they thought it was, and a lack of action on racism means they think it could get worse. It's because of this government's choices that a whole lot of folks are planning to leave our beautiful province.

Premier, you won't have a thriving province without people who are thriving. People thrive when they are supported, when they see opportunities to innovate and to create and in an environment that's safe and healthy. The trend of people leaving is a warning to you, but we're here to say that it doesn't need to be this way. I meet people every day who are fighting to move our province forward despite being governed by a party that wants to bring us backward.

If you're one of those people thinking about leaving, it's not my place to beg you to stay. I can't imagine what it's like to have come to that decision. But for those of you who can stay, I promise you a better future is possible, and I promise you that together we'll get there.

Agriculture Hall of Fame Inductee

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, this past fall the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame announced three new inductees from across the province. Today I would like to publicly recognize a constituent of mine who is one of the three inductees, Mr. George Visser. George farmed close to Neerlandia in the county of Barrhead and has been a leader in the agricultural community since the 1970s. Always looking ahead for the best farming practices, George led the way in modernizing and specializing in certain commodities on his farm. Other producers followed his lead, and during the 1980s the Neerlandia region became one of the most concentrated hog production areas in Alberta. George's foresight and ability to work

with the team around him eventually led to the development of two large hog operations, Twin Peaks Feeders and Barrwest Pork.

George also served as a councillor for the county of Barrhead and later as their reeve. He was influential in his role on the Rural Municipalities of Alberta organization, where he strongly advocated for rural Alberta on numerous issues. To quote the biography from the hall of fame:

Mr. Visser has been a man of vision, an innovator, leader and advocate for agriculture and rural Alberta throughout his [entire] life. He is a man of conviction and a man that understands the value of working together and of collaboration.

I would like to add, on a more personal note, that George has been a friend and a mentor to me for many years. Rural roots run deep, and to this day I have the pleasure of working alongside his family. While on the farm George and his wife, Florence, raised eight children and were always willing to help out in their community. Their love for their family, church, community, sports, and farming did not go unnoticed. George always reminded those around him that without the blessing of his heavenly Father, none of this would have been possible.

The strength and perseverance of rural Alberta was built and led by individuals like George Visser. On behalf of myself and my colleagues here in the Legislature I say thank you, George, for your lifetime of excellence in so many areas and for your selfless work.

The Speaker: I thought you were going to mention perhaps the great constituent of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills Mr. David Price, who was also inducted into the hall of fame.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Registry Service Privatization

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a real estate agent for 30 years before being elected, I know the value of Alberta's publicly operated registry systems well, and now I stand to protect the legitimate role of government to provide these services so that the integrity of Alberta land titles and other provincial registrations are not subject to question. That is why I find the UCP's consideration to sell land title, corporate, and personal property registries deeply troubling.

I've found no rationale in the budget for this draconian measure. Not only do these registries provide an essential and trusted and verifiably accurate administrative service; they also generate revenue. Why, therefore, is the government wanting to get rid of them? All I can see is the UCP's obsession with privatizing Alberta.

1:40

First, they wanted to sell provincial parks. Then they courted Australian billionaires to take a look at mining the eastern slopes for coal deposits. Thankfully, Albertans are pushing back against these short-sighted decisions, and I'm hoping that Albertans will do the same to ensure that registries are not sold off as well. I call upon the 10,000 real estate agents in this province, I appeal to every lawyer in Alberta, I ask every business owner in Alberta who has ever transacted in land, every mortgage lender who ever wanted to ensure that their interest in land was protected, and every insurance company who might need to register an interest against Alberta land, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, I call upon every Albertan who owns or hopes to own their own home one day to consider what the government is offering up to the highest bidder. They are selling the keys to our land registry system, and once sold to the private sector, the locks will be changed and the price of entry will go up.

Right now the province guarantees against defects in title. Will the private sector offer the same buck-stops-here remediation process? Not likely. I have many other concerns with the government's desire

to sell off Alberta's registries. Jason Kenney's former chief of staff and campaign director, Nick Koolsbergen, lobbied the government on the sale of registries. Mr. Speaker, the UCP should be spending less time in backrooms talking to lobbyists and more time listening to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has been around here for five or six years now. I'm sure he knows that the use of names, even in a member's statement, would be inappropriate.

Hemp Industry in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, job creation and economic diversification is one of the top priorities of Alberta's government. I'm very pleased to see this economic diversification happening in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Vegreville along with Alberta Innovates is developing value-added agriculture through their industrial hemp park. This value-added agriculture program offers seed to final product solutions pertinent to industrial hemp. This 80-acre development will be fully serviced and will become the leader in hemp innovators and make Vegreville the hemp capital of Canada.

Alberta Innovates and their subsidiary InnoTech Alberta is a leading research and technology organization serving the needs of industry, entrepreneurs, and the public sector. They are a large employer in my constituency and play a key role in Alberta's economic recovery. Alberta Innovates has launched an industrial hemp program. The fibre-processing plant located in Vegreville concentrates on stripping hemp and flax fibres.

I'm glad to see that the Vegreville hemp industrial park is in its final engineering and planning stages. The sewer lift station will be going to tender this week, and the on-site and off-site services of the project will be going to tender in April 2021. Construction is planned to begin in May 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in October 2022. Local communities and businesses will also benefit from this facility. The town of Bruderheim will benefit from this as they soon will be home to North America's largest hemp-processing facility. It is on track to be finished this summer, and it will process hemp for fibre, hurd, and dust products. The facility will service the global market for hemp fibre.

These are the kinds of innovations that lead to job creation, investment, and diversification. I'm glad to see that Alberta's recovery plan in economic diversification is working here in Alberta and in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Community and Social Services Budget 2021-2022

Ms Renaud: The legislative oversight committee tasked with reviewing ministry annual reports and audited financial statements is called Public Accounts. Since forming government, the UCP majority has blocked the Ministry of Community and Social Services from appearing before this committee. That is why changes made in the Community and Social Services ministry business plan for Budget '21 are so concerning. The budget outlines almost \$4 billion in spending, impacting the lives of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Albertans. The plan is ridiculous in its lack of substance and transparency, containing only three outcomes to measure and spending details on only \$115 million.

Here are a few examples: \$14 million has been directed to the Premier's new civil society slush fund, with no details on where the money will go or where it came from. Income support is slashed by millions, with no corresponding investment in job creation for thousands of desperate Albertans. This government clawed back

millions as a result of federal emergency benefits but hides behind empty talking points and refuses to disclose where these clawbacks will be used. Disability supports are inadequate to meet growth pressures, and almost 6,000 Albertans continue to linger on waiting lists. Millions are cut from homelessness outreach during a public health emergency, and for the first time in 22 years a new women's shelter has opened, Jessie's House in Morinville, and there is zero operational dollars for this home. The majority of grants to service dog organizations are going to companies that charge people up to \$45,000 for a dog, reducing access for disabled Albertans to these life-saving animals.

This budget fails to take any meaningful steps to eliminate poverty and homelessness or to support the Albertans that need it most. Every day more and more Albertans see through the spin, so I hope the UCP will allow this ministry to be called to public account. Albertans deserve leaders who are unafraid to tackle important issues without hiding behind process and misleading words. That change is coming in 2023.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Budget 2021

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 25 Alberta's government introduced Budget 2021. While the past year has been challenging, we can now see light at the end of the tunnel, and there are more and more reasons to be optimistic. From very early on in the pandemic Alberta's government recognized that a robust plan was needed to get Albertans back on track, to create jobs, and to drive investment. Budget 2021 will spend \$3.1 billion more in 2021-22 to continue supporting strategies in Alberta's recovery plan, which is a bold strategy to create jobs, build infrastructure, and diversify our economy. Alberta's government is accounting for \$1.7 billion in additional capital funding, more than was planned in Budget 2020. This means that the three-year capital plan is now \$20.7 billion and will support over 50,000 direct and over 40,000 indirect jobs through to 2024; \$1.5 billion is being directed to immediate initiatives to support jobs and strategic investments in key economic sectors, and an additional \$500 million will be dedicated to a recovery plan contingency.

At the same time, Alberta's government is making another record investment in our health care system. In fact, Budget 2021 invests \$21.4 billion in Health's operating budget, an increase of nearly \$900 million from 2020-2021. This budget's responsible approach to spending has enabled additional investment in priority areas, including health care and job creation. We know that Alberta is one of the most desirable places to live, work, and invest, which is why Alberta's government recently created the investment and growth fund. This fund provides an additional incentive and a final push for investors to choose Alberta over competing jurisdictions.

While 2020 may have been a year of unprecedented challenges, Alberta's future is one of unlimited opportunity. Thank you.

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

COVID-19 Cases and Economic Relaunch Strategy

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to withhold information from the people of this province about a public health emergency unlike any we've seen in our lifetime. Over the weekend we saw hundreds of new cases of COVID-19 and a particularly alarming rise in the number of variant-strain cases. We now have the most variant cases in all of Canada despite Ontario, with the second-most, having three and a half times the population. We know these variant strains are much

more contagious, a fact that's led many doctors and public health professionals to question whether we should really be dining indoors in restaurants and whether the government should go further in reopening things like casinos, banquet halls, and other indoor venues.

Now, this government will say that anyone calling into question their public health decisions is antibusiness or cheering for Alberta to fail. That's ridiculous and insulting to the intelligence of the people of this province. Those who face the very real threat of COVID-19 head on are the ones that actually want our province to get through this pandemic, to succeed. They want to ensure that the thousands of lives lost were not in vain and that the difficult lessons over the past year have actually been learned. Rather than supporting restaurants, movie theatres, and so on with proper funding should they need to remain closed, this government has done the bare minimum. Their support programs have rolled out at a snail's pace with criteria that's left many unable to qualify and out on their own.

I truly fear that it will take some time before we learn the true impact of this government's mismanagement of the second wave of COVID-19 and now the potential onset of a third, that many feel could have been avoided. Still, rather than coming clean with modelling and an actual plan to address the variant spread, this government continues to hide that information from Albertans despite the fact that it's readily available in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, in this time of a global pandemic our province needs true leadership. Sadly, one year in, Albertans have yet to see it from this government.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

COVID-19 Cases and Economic Relaunch Strategy

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This pandemic has gone on so long, causing stress and heartbreak for so many. We all want it to be over, but it's not over. The vaccine rollout is still in the early stages although going well. Supply is tenuous, though, and as of this weekend Alberta is reporting the highest number of variant cases in Canada. That's not even per capita; that's more than B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba combined. Doctors are warning about a third wave. Premier, will you commit today to delaying step 3 until enough Albertans have had their shots?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Minister of Health will be making an announcement in this respect this afternoon with Dr. Hinshaw. As always, Alberta's government follows the data, accepts our expert public health advice, and seeks a balance to protect both lives and livelihoods. The Leader of the Opposition is right to raise the concern about a recent growth in cases, particularly variants of concern, and that is why we implore all Albertans – we know that people are fed up with all of this; God knows we all are. But we have just a few weeks left before we can get a critical mass of the population inoculated. Please be careful.

Ms Notley: Well, "We've been in a third wave for a week. Anybody who ... continues to pretend it's not happening is gaslighting you. This is happening." That, Mr. Speaker, is Dr. Joe Vipond. Dr. James Talbot says, quote, if this were a horror movie, you'd be hearing music in the background. Dr. Noel Gibney is just as blunt. He says: reopening now sets the stage for superspreader events. Premier, while we do have less than 300 hospitalizations today, we also

know they are rising. Will you commit to following your own benchmarks and delay step 3 until they are declining?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government will follow the policy direction that we gave. It's very clear that there is a worrisome increase in new cases and in active cases. I would like to correct one effort by the NDP to frighten people. When the member talks frequently about the number of variant cases here in comparison to other provinces, the truth is that because of the travel pilot program, we were identifying variant cases at a far greater incidence and much earlier than other provinces. We're also doing full screening of all positive tests for the variants and the most robust genome sequencing of any province.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this feels a bit like déjà vu. Back in November we repeatedly urged this government to show caution and to do the right thing to protect our economy and to save lives. Instead, they stalled, and they waited to take action. Businesses didn't get the support they needed, infections skyrocketed, and our province lost more people in six weeks than the first six months. We are so close to being through this. Will the Premier commit today to limiting further reopening until such time as Albertans are actually vaccinated? It's not a hard question. You're the boss. You can tell us right now.

Mr. Kenney: Again, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's policy will be informed by the data, by what's really happening, and by the advice of our medical experts. Indeed, we've been clear that the path forward on reopening is predicated on declining hospitalizations. Unfortunately, we see the opposite now. We all need to get a hold of this because what matters more than the stringency of public health measures is compliance with them, and that's up to 4.4 million Albertans. I plead with those folks. I know they're impatient. If we can just get through the vaccinations in the next few weeks, we'll be there.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: One of the best things for compliance, Mr. Speaker, is clarity, yet we can't get an answer.

Economic Recovery

Ms Notley: Now, there are more than 240,000 people in this province who are desperately looking for work. Last Friday we learned that some of them have decided they won't find it under this Premier as more people left Alberta than arrived in 2020. Mr. Speaker, the key to recovering our economy is our people, so this isn't good. Right now Albertans need hope. They expected the Premier's budget to include specific strategies for economic recovery, their cost, their timelines, and the projected jobs associated with each. They weren't there. Where is that plan?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition is not aware of it, but the plan was released last June before any other government in Canada. It's Alberta's recovery plan, a bold plan to build, diversify, and create new jobs. It's a plan that is already yielding results, which is why the Bank of Montreal, the National Bank, the Conference Board of Canada, and others in the last two weeks have projected that Alberta will lead Canada in economic growth and in job growth. We're seeing the best year already for film and television in this province, for information technology, and much more.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the plan is not working, and no one says that we will lead the country in job growth. No one.

Now, one thing that was in this budget is the continued damaging cuts to postsecondary. Last month the U of A Students' Union surveyed over 500 undergraduate students, and a third of them said that they are definitely or probably moving away. Blair Howes, president of the faculty association at SAIT, said that, quote, they'll move on and probably never come back, which is not going to help the economic recovery of this province in any way, shape, or form. Premier, why are you chasing our future away?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader just uttered a falsehood, which is very typical of her performance in this place. The National Bank, which is a major bank, last week projected that Alberta will see 4.6 per cent growth in employment in 2021 versus 4.0 per cent across the country, the highest in the country. I'd be happy to table this.

It is true that Alberta has been through five tough years. We lost tens of thousands of people under the NDP. I'm delighted to see those numbers of net out-migration reduced to only 2,000 last year.

Ms Notley: Repeated sources say that our ability to recover our jobs will in fact fall well behind most other provinces across the country.

Now, one of the very few job-creation programs in the Premier's budget hinges on federal funding, and he's just eight days away from losing \$62 million of it. Mr. Speaker, this is an entire third of the program, a program that is already overdue. His jobs now program has become jobs maybe later because of his incompetence. Premier, Albertans are counting on you. Why have you failed them so profoundly?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, like several Canadian provinces, we've been asking the federal government for appropriate flexibility in that cost-shared program. One thing that will be unique about it is that Alberta will be adding a far larger share of provincial funding to the renewed labour development programming because of our desire to create tens of thousands of new jobs and have people trained for them. But while the NDP leader is busy talking down Alberta, we are experiencing the best year in the history of our forestry industry, one of the best years ever for agriculture, the best year ever for venture capital, the best year ever for film and television, one of the best years ever for information technology, and many other critical parts of our economy.

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

Ms Notley: And the highest unemployment rate in the country.

Climate Change Strategy

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada held their annual convention this weekend. Delegates voted against a resolution stating that the Conservative Party believes, quote, climate change is real. Those are commonly held beliefs everywhere else. It is 2021. Climate change is real, and we should be more than willing to act; we should be acting. Does the Premier not understand that his failure to take this seriously is not only inflaming climate denial now on the national stage; it is also jeopardizing jobs right here in Alberta?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do take the challenge of climate change very seriously, which is why we've created our technology innovation and emissions reduction program with a quarter of a billion dollar investment in emissions reducing technology last year.

It's why we are working with the industry and the federal government massively to expand the carbon capture utilization and storage technology, of which Alberta is the leader and which the NDP has always opposed. But where we differ is that the NDP thinks that punishing people for driving to work and heating their homes is an environmental policy. On that, we fundamentally disagree.

Ms Notley: "Climate changes all the time." "There is evidence . . . climate scientists have been discredited." That's the Member for Airdrie-East. The Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat has funded climate denial propaganda. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright called the science "alarmist rhetoric by the supposed experts." The Member for Calgary-Glenmore said that for some, climate change is, quote, a pretty good thing. And the Premier himself once said that carbon pollution is life. Premier, climate change denial kills investment in oil and gas. You know it. Your experts tell you that. You have to take this seriously. Why won't you?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the minister of the environment corrected me; I misspoke in my last answer. I said that the Alberta government had invested a quarter of a billion dollars in emissions-reducing technology through the TIER program last year. In fact – I'm corrected – it was three-quarters of a billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker, we just celebrated the first one-millionth tonne of CO₂ sequestered by the Wolf Midstream project, showing that Alberta continues to lead the world in CCUS technology, to which the NDP has always been opposed. Our focus is on technological progress, not punishing people with a retail carbon tax.

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, this Premier's Alberta organizers bragged to the media that they had the biggest voting block this weekend at their convention and that therefore the Premier owns that decision. The clear rejection of the science of climate change by a supposedly mainstream Canadian political party is alarming. Taking the issue of climate change seriously is critical to our economic growth and particularly for the future of our oil and gas industry. Premier, what's it going to be? Are you going to stand up today and convince your members of this fact, or are you going to let them lead Alberta into another decade of denial?

The Speaker: I might just provide some caution to the Leader of the Opposition. There are many ways to make a question about government policy. That certainly was very clearly about party policy.

But if the hon. Premier would like to answer, he's entitled to do so.

Mr. Kenney: It was, Mr. Speaker; it was just a classic NDP rant.

Let me respond by saying that, like, there's a difference here. When the NDP comes to a convention, what happens is that she tells the union bosses how to force the members to vote, and she stitches it all up, whereas in a Conservative conference – I know it's a shocking idea – there's actually a diversity of views, there's freedom of thought, and there's freedom of speech. I know that she loved kicking people out of her caucus who didn't agree with her on everything all the time. That's not how Conservatives operate. They'd better change their name because they're no longer new, and they're certainly not democratic. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

COVID-19 in Schools

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has failed to invest properly in our schools, and our students are paying the price. Over the weekend we learned that more than 1,400 students in Calgary's Central Memorial high school are being forced to learn online until at least after spring break due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Central is one of 15 Calgary schools with 10 or more COVID-19 cases. Now students are forced to learn from home during a critical time as they prepare for postsecondary and for their future careers. To the Premier: are you really going to claim that there's nothing more you can do to support students and stop the spread of COVID-19 in schools?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, hundreds of millions of dollars of additional resources have been provided, equipment, free masks for students, and other equipment for the schools. But let's be clear about where that NDP question is coming from. From day one they have wanted the schools padlocked. From day one they wanted a hard lockdown. They wanted to impose the huge mental health damage on children of not being able to benefit from in-person learning. They were wrong to create fear and hysteria about it then, and they're wrong to do so now.

Ms Hoffman: What the Premier just said is patently false. What we did was propose a plan to make schools safer. We did that in the summer. We did it again in December. In December we proposed the use of rapid tests in schools to slow the spread of COVID-19. Three months later the government responded with a pilot project in just two schools. To date Alberta has used only a quarter of the more than 2.8 million COVID-19 rapid tests that have been made available to us by the federal government. There are hundreds of schools province-wide that could use these tests. There are 15 with outbreaks in Calgary alone. Premier, why won't you prioritize the use of rapid tests for COVID-19 in schools so that we can slow the spread before it gets even worse?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The NDP, which is the voice of the big special interests: their plan to reopen the schools was to build hundreds of new schools last spring and thousands of classrooms and hire 10,000 new teachers. No, it wasn't a plan to reopen the schools; it was a plan to keep them shut, like they have done in most of Ontario and Quebec. We in Alberta believe that that would be the wrong decision for children. We've invested significantly in supporting school boards and administrators to keep their kids safe. We'll continue to do so.

Ms Hoffman: We know that the COVID-19 variant is more contagious. We know that Alberta has the most COVID-19 variant cases in Canada, even more than Ontario, which has more than triple our population. We know that this Premier scoffed at calls to reduce class sizes; he did it again today. We call on him to hire more staff. Instead, he actually laid off thousands of education workers, and today we have 2,000 fewer teaching and support staff than we did before the pandemic. To the Premier. You can't possibly be proud of this record. Will you do something today, anything, to stop the spread of COVID-19 in schools, or are you just going to sit by and wait for schools to close for a third time under your lack of leadership?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that this government made the right decision, to safely reopen the schools, by ignoring the NDP's advice to shut them down. The NDP should stand up and apologize for the fear and hysteria they tried to create about the reopening of schools. The truth is that less than a small fraction of

1 per cent of the 700,000 students in Alberta has been affected by in-classroom or in-school transmission. The NDP was wrong about this all along. It's time for them to admit it and to apologize.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the past few weeks the McLennan hospital has had a hard time getting locums to cover their doctors' time off on weekends. Members of the community have expressed their concerns to me regarding this issue. We know there is now a concerted effort to recruit needed doctors for rural Alberta, and we look forward to the results of those efforts. Alberta's rural, remote, northern program provided incentives for rural doctors. To the Health minister: will this program be continuing, and have doctors in rural Alberta been supportive of it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're spending about \$81 million this year to address rural physician recruitment and retention. It's been a long-standing issue in Canada, not just in Alberta. That's why we made significant investments to protect rural physician recruitment and retention, and that includes the rural, remote, northern program, that the member mentions. We removed the \$60,000 cap on the variable fee for the RRNP. We have also exempted rural physicians from the overhead policy and frozen the premiums that they pay for their insurance for rural and family physicians at \$1,000. The RRNP program here in Alberta is the most generous of its kind in Canada.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Minister. Given that in the past discussions with doctors and the Alberta Medical Association the complex care modifier was always a hot topic and given that in the past there have been changes contemplated and that these potential changes have been a concern to doctors in my constituency, to the minister: will the complex modifier continue as before, or will there be changes? How will this affect rural doctor retention strategies going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard the concerns of rural communities and rural physicians, and we listened. During these unprecedented times we wanted to ensure that the physicians on the front lines would focus solely on providing patient care, so we cancelled all proposed changes to complex modifiers on March 17 of last year. Reflecting on that, changes to complex modifiers was a policy that we never should have pursued in the first place, and there will be no changes being made going forward.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you again, Minister. Given that we know that for decades there has never been an overabundance of doctors in rural Alberta and given that we know that it will take some time to correct this issue even with the new initiatives to attract and retain rural doctors and given that billing codes known as Z codes have been an issue in rural Alberta, to the minister: will these codes stay the same as regular codes going forward, and do you view these codes as good incentives for attracting and retaining doctors in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a sign of good faith while physicians are considering the tentative agreement with the AMA, which both the AMA and the government have agreed not to discuss publicly, we've extended the timeline for any further implementation of new Z codes until December 31. That means that the rates for Z codes will remain equal to the rate of the regular codes paid in a community clinic. This will allow more time for the ministry and AHS to discuss a fair and equitable solution with the Alberta Medical Association and their members. This is being communicated to physicians both by the AMA and through the medical bulletin issued by the ministry.

COVID-19 Cases in Lethbridge

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, case counts of COVID-19 keep climbing in Lethbridge. The counts have more than tripled. There are now more than 500 active cases. The mayor of Lethbridge has stated that he is worried about the situation getting out of control because of these escalating numbers. On Friday I called for the government to provide a joint briefing to the Lethbridge MLAs, the mayor, and city council about how the province plans to have an actual action plan to address the explosion of cases in Lethbridge. Will the Minister of Health commit to this by the end of today?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to make sure that the medical officer of health for south zone as well as all of our medical officers of health throughout AHS and throughout the province have the resources that they need to be able to communicate with local communities, including the city of Lethbridge. We'll continue to make sure that those MOHs have all the resources that they need and that we are also working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs to make sure that the community outreach program that is being administered by his ministry is also there to make sure that all Albertans know that the supports that they have available to them are going to continue to be available to them.

2:10

Ms Phillips: Given, Mr. Speaker, that there have been two significant outbreaks, at Grandview village and at Sunrise Poultry Processors, and given that schools are reporting cases, including that of my own children – I spent the weekend hearing from constituents that they haven't heard about a specific action plan from the minister to protect the residents of Lethbridge. Can the minister outline what steps he's taking to address the third wave in Lethbridge? If there is a specific action plan that the government is taking with additional resources, I'd like to share it with the people of Lethbridge.

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, it's an action plan that we've been using throughout the pandemic to make sure that AHS has the resources that it needs to be able to respond to the pandemic, to make sure that our continuing care and other congregate living facilities have the resources that they need to be able to prevent spread within their facilities. We're going to continue to make sure that that's the case. We're also going to follow the evidence and follow the recommendations of Dr. Hinshaw and the folks in her office as well as the MOHs throughout AHS and the amazing job that they're doing in working on a local level with communities to make sure the spread in our communities is limited as much as possible while we continue to reply to the pandemic.

Ms Phillips: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that we've now had a year and we know what the specific action plans that we can take are and given that Lethbridge now has 500 cases and growing, where is the specific information for the community on rapid testing, on

assistance for isolation, contact tracing, specific supports for workers at affected businesses? What is the province doing on any specific languages or culturally appropriate services or supports that are needed? Where is the plan, and can I help the minister share it?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure that the member just admitted that we've had the plan and it's been communicated for the last year. We will continue to do that. We'll continue to work with the MOHs in AHS throughout the five zones. We'll continue to look at the evidence and get recommendations from Dr. Hinshaw and her office. We'll continue with the community outreach program through my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, continue to roll out the rapid tests through employment and schools to make sure that those opportunities, those tools are able to help us with asymptomatic screening, and continue to make sure that AHS has all the resources that it needs to respond to the pandemic.

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

Health Care Worker Contract Negotiations

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contracts of many of our essential health care workers expired in March of last year, right when COVID-19 showed up in Alberta. These critical workers have stepped up and done what is needed to support all Albertans and the health system, including agreeing to delay contract negotiations until March of this year. These workers deserve contract certainty given everything they've done for Albertans in this province. To the minister: why won't you respect these workers and the sacrifices they've made over the past year by starting the negotiations that they are asking for?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members on this side of the House have great respect and appreciation for our front-line health care workers, who are delivering to Albertans every day in battling the pandemic. It is because they're so focused on the pandemic that we requested a further delay in bargaining negotiations.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's lovely that the minister wants to speak on behalf of workers who can speak for themselves and given that the UCP is planning to fire potentially 11,000 health care workers when the pandemic is over and given that these workers have no reason to trust this government, which has insulted them on numerous occasions, and given that while the minister's negotiations would pull away front-line resources – given that saying that is ridiculous because those involved in labour relations are different from those co-ordinating COVID response or vaccinations, perhaps the real reason is that they wish to push negotiations and firings into the summer, when Albertans might not be paying as close attention.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy again to be able to speak about the AHS review that we started in 2019 – there was an implementation plan that was provided to us in October – point out again, another great opportunity, that the AHS performance review was lauded by the member as common-sense proposals. Now, I know that got him in a lot of trouble with his colleagues over on the other side because, as we know, the NDP answers to one stakeholder, the unions. They were common-sense

proposals. We're happy to work with AHS to proceed with a balanced portion of those recommendations through their implementation plan. We'll continue to do so.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the workers who the minister says it's common sense to fire have made numerous sacrifices over the past year to keep Albertans healthy and help them recover from COVID and given that these workers have done so under looming threat of losing their jobs once this government no longer needs them and given that the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance stated that without an extension these workers wouldn't have job security isolation pay, additional paid leave, and other benefits, to the same minister: why are you disrespecting the very workers who've been on the front lines throughout this pandemic by threatening to take away their isolation pay and benefits if they don't bend to your will? When will this war on health care workers end?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, members on this side of the House have great appreciation and respect for front-line health care workers, who've delivered to Albertans every day during the pandemic. That is why we requested a further delay in negotiations, so that our health care workers can continue to focus, without distraction, on dealing with the pandemic. We're almost past this pandemic. Dealing with it is our number one priority.

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

Mental Health and Addiction Services

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is too important to be overlooked. Partnering with local advocacy groups and treatment centres is the best way to deliver support Albertans need. As the MLA for Airdrie-East I believe in the platform our government ran on, which included a comprehensive plan to address mental health and addiction issues. To the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions: what are you and your ministry doing to help those struggling with mental health and addiction issues?

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

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to answer this on behalf of the associate minister, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working diligently to improve access to services, to expand programs, establish new publicly funded mental health and addiction treatment spaces. On top of that, during COVID-19 we engaged with local organizations across the province, like those in the member's constituency, through a \$25 million community grant program to help deliver local services to their communities during the pandemic. These organizations are doing incredible work, and we thank them for their dedication to mental health and addiction.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that local Airdrie mental health and addiction organizations have received a combined total of almost \$1 million in grant funding in 2020 and given that our government removed financial barriers to addiction treatment and further given that Albertans were charged \$40 a day for a user fee for residential addiction treatment, Minister, can you please highlight how this change has affected the lives of Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely can. The change to remove user fees for publicly funded residential addiction treatment beds means that every Albertan regardless of their financial situation has the opportunity to recover and to build a better life. No person should have to remortgage their house or sell their car to afford addiction treatment as they did under a previous government. Recovery is for everyone, and this change ensures that everyone has access to the care that they need to get well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you, Minister. Given that the ministry of mental health and addictions has supported Albertans through this very challenging year and given that our commitment to mental health and addiction, especially during COVID-19, was broad and comprehensive, to the same minister: can you please highlight the range of resources available to Albertans who are struggling with mental health and addictions?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID mental health and addiction action plan included the community grant program that I mentioned, but it also expanded access to capacity of existing supports, like the addiction and mental health helplines and the Kids Help Phone. It also included virtual programs like Togetherall, which is a free peer-to-peer online site that's monitored by mental health professionals. This is all in addition to the 135 clinics across the province that offer intake, assessment, diagnosis, referral, and treatment services to folks who are struggling. For anyone looking for a full list of resources, it's at alberta.ca/mentalhealth.

Racism and Hate Promotion Prevention

Mr. Dang: We must do more to fight racism. In recent weeks racialized Albertans have been assaulted in broad daylight, torch marches have been held in our cities that intend to terrorize residents, a Confederate flag, which represents only intolerance and hatred and white supremacy, was flown in Calgary in place of the Canadian flag. We need to send a message that we unequivocally reject the use or appearance of hate symbols in Alberta. Will the Premier commit that he and his cabinet will vote in favour of my motion today that would denounce the hate symbols and hate demonstrations and rallies in Alberta?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very grateful that this motion is coming to the floor. Looking forward to debating it.

Thank you.

2:20

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister of multiculturalism refused to accept the motion that condemns racism and given that just this weekend a woman was attacked in Calgary, was beaten and her hijab was torn, and given that there have been six other hate-motivated assaults in Edmonton in recent months and given that in response to these vicious and horrific acts, the National Council of Canadian Muslims has called for the creation of a bipartisan committee and given that we must take action as a province

to stand up against the growing incidents of racism in Alberta, will the Premier finally respond to the national council's call for the creation of a bipartisan committee to develop antiracism legislation policies, and if not . . .

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

Mrs. Aheer: Just in case the member didn't hear it the first time and for clarity, I'm very much looking forward to debating this motion. I'm very grateful that it's being brought forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Dang: Given that the minister has refused to accept the motion and given that the minister has refused to accept a bipartisan committee and given that there should be no torches through the streets of our cities and given that those skeptical of the intent behind these torch marches should know that they were using advertised images of the 2017 white supremacist march in Charlottesville and given that my colleagues would be keen to work with this government to develop legislation that would ban these and other symbols of hatred and given that the B.C. government has stated that they are working on legislation to outlaw hate symbols in public places, will the Premier commit to banning these hate symbols from public places and work with the opposition to develop legislation to this effect as quickly as possible? Yes or no?

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, am I mistaken? Is the motion on the floor already? My understanding is that the motion needs to come to the floor. Then it will be debated. I'm very looking forward to working on this motion with the MLA from across the way. However, I would suggest that if bipartisanship is what is expected to work on this, let's bring the motion forward first, and then let's work on it together.

Thank you.

Alberta in Canada

Member Loyola: This government moved quickly to shut down any debate on my motion that would state that this Legislature supports a united Canada and denounce those attempting to separate Alberta from Canada. They pulled some sort of legislative trick by the House leader, forcing this House to wait five months for this debate, but despite their best efforts this motion will return so that this House can express their support for a united Canada. Will the Premier support this motion and stand up for a united Canada, or can we expect more procedural tricks to protect this Premier from the separatists in his backbench?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, protect the Premier? The Premier has a pro-Confederation motion on the floor of this very Assembly. The hon. member is a little bit late to the party. With that said, I won't predetermine what will take place during private members' business this afternoon because it's up to the private members of the Assembly.

Member Loyola: Then why the need to block my motion?

Given that the UCP blocking this motion from being debated wasn't the first time that the UCP has tried to block a debate on supporting Canada and given that Albertans deserve to know what this Premier is doing to stand up for Canada against the calls for separation coming from the seats behind him, will the Premier explain how he can claim to be a federalist when he won't even ensure his own caucus members support a united Canada? How is that helpful for our economic future?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is part of a caucus where he's not allowed to express his own views and will be even kicked out, it appears, if he does that. But I'm proud to be part of a caucus that enshrined within the standing orders the ability of our private members to vote the way that their constituents want them to inside this place, and that's what we do, particularly when we're working on private members' business. In addition to that, though, I do hope the hon. member supports the Premier's motion on the exact same issue, that was on the floor of the Assembly first, and we'll see where that goes as it's debated in the Chamber in the coming days.

Member Loyola: Given that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has called for a vote on separation should his specific proposals not be met by a deadline – quite ironic – and given that this deadline was last week and given that the Member for Red Deer-South called our fellow Canadians “hostile, parasitic partners,” will the Premier stand in this House, right here, and tell the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat that there will be no vote on separation and apologize to the rest of Canada for the insults levelled by the Member for Red Deer-South?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will apologize for that member's complete and utter lack of respect for the private members' process of this Chamber and will also refer him again to the same motion that is on the Order Paper from the hon. the Premier, that says, “Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly (a) affirm its loyalty to a united Canadian federation, and (b) urge the government to obtain a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.” I certainly hope that member will support that motion as it's debated inside this Chamber, particularly finally standing up to his close ally Justin Trudeau in Ottawa, because we are going to do that in the Alberta Chamber. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Oldman River Basin Water Allocation Watershed Management

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, in my constituency and across Alberta communities have an interest in maintaining a secure water supply. In southern Alberta historically fluctuating water levels have made the appropriate allocation of water even more crucial for our communities and economy. Statements in the media and by some in the Official Opposition claiming there are changes to the Oldman water allocation order have many people questioning the prospective impact to our communities and this important resource. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what changes, if any, are taking place to water allocations in the Oldman River basin?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that certain people are fearmongering when it comes to water inside the Oldman basin. To be clear, nothing has changed when it comes to that allocation. The conversation that has been taking place down there was, and I quote: recognizing the need for sustainable water use by setting aside 20 per cent of the original order volume for aquatic environment needs for fish and wildlife. There are no changes to the allocation, nor proposed changes to the allocation to increase water for coal despite the fact that the opposition continues to make that up. We continue to move forward with protecting the environment in a very special place in this province.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta has a robust regulatory system that manages our province's resources and development and given that any proposal to change water allocations requires a transparent process that weighs the environmental impact of this new allocation and given that many of my constituents have reached out to me with questions about the process that proposed coal mine projects have to go through, are there any proposed changes to the Oldman River allocations that are related to coal projects?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, the proposed changes that have been talked about, not decided – and that's the process talked about with the areas about bringing forward 20 per cent of the water already within that allocation for aquatic reasons to protect the environment as well as procedural stuff around that allocation. There has been no proposal to increase water for any industrial use in the Oldman River basin. We are committed to protecting that water source for both the industries that already work within the area as well as for the environment and the people that call the Crowsnest Pass region home.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you again to the minister for his answer. Given that Alberta is a world-class destination for fly-fishing, hunting, and other recreational activities in our waterways and given that our province is home to many species of fish with some, like the bull trout, classified as threatened, again to the Minister of Environment and Parks: what other actions are being taken by Alberta's government to conserve our waterways and protect those species who call our streams, rivers, and lakes home?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, 30-some seconds is not enough to go through the whole list, but I'll give a few: \$4 million for improvements to the Allison Creek brood trout hatchery, \$12.6 million to upgrades to the Sam Livingstone Fish Hatchery, \$26 million for the Raven Creek Brood Trout Station near Caroline, \$10 million for the Cold Lake Fish Hatchery. We're also doing projects: \$9.7 million through the land stewardship fund for projects to improve water crossings and waterways in partnerships with our partners Trout Unlimited as well as \$5 million for grants to land trust organizations to protect and restore natural areas, including waterways, as well as our platform commitment of \$1 million to Cows and Fish in the eastern slopes a year.

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

Postsecondary Education Performance-based Funding

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend the minister let postsecondary institutions know that 5 per cent of their funding will be at risk from a performance-based funding scheme of his own design. This marks yet another twist and turn by the minister with his plans to undermine our institutions at a time when we should be empowering them to help energize our economic recovery. To the minister: why won't you just admit that you are wrong and abandon your performance-based funding scheme altogether?

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

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I indeed will be moving forward on implementing performance-based funding. Thank you to the member for the opportunity to chat about it. By using that model, we'll help ensure that we are strengthening

outcomes of our postsecondary institutions. Of course, during these difficult times our students need every possible advantage to help ensure that they have access to work placement opportunities and are set up for success in the best possible way, and through the performance-based funding model we'll be able to do that. As well, we've implemented a number of measures, including funding to Mitacs, Careers, Women Building Futures, and a number of organizations to support them in economic recovery.

2:30

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that nearly \$700 million has been cut from universities since this government has taken office – and that is certainly a strange way to say that we're here to help you, taking away their funding at the same time – Blair Howes, president of the faculty association at SAIT, for example, warned of a mass exodus of students as a result. He said that they'll move on and probably not come back, which is not going to help us with our economic recovery in any way, shape, or form. Minister, you're literally forcing students out of the province with your plans. How exactly does that help us with our lives and livelihoods, and how does that help us with our province to build an economic future?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a little confusing: I mean, on the one day we're cutting a billion dollars from postsecondary; now we're cutting \$700 million, apparently. I don't know. It's hard to try and keep track of all of the numbers that the NDP keep throwing around. That being said, you know, we are taking steps to ensure that our students have opportunities right here in the province. As I mentioned, we're putting a priority on work-integrated learning and other measures to help ensure that our students have access to work placement opportunities that will help ensure that they stay here within the province. As well, we've provided funding to other initiatives to support the development of talent right here at home.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we all know that the UCP's performance-based funding scheme is just another tool for the minister to cut our schools and given that the minister continues to talk as if he has no clue about the damage that he's doing – students are paying more; postsecondaries are firing staff; entire programs are at risk of closure – to the minister. You've threatened the reputation of our institutions for decades to come. Will you explain, please: who are you listening to? It's certainly not economists, innovators, business owners, faculties, students, or Albertans in general.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, I'll tell you who I'm not listening to, and that's the member opposite and those members there. That's for certain, Mr. Speaker. After several years in the ministry with very little direction for our postsecondary institutions, no clear plans to convert institutions to universities, no direction for the postsecondary environment, we're building, in consultation with our stakeholders, a vision for the future through Alberta 2030 to strengthen the postsecondary system, to provide, finally, some clear strategic direction for the advanced education system, something the members opposite didn't do. In fact, when it comes to advanced ed, I don't know what they did in the last few years.

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

Taxi Driver Eligibility for Government Programs Critical Worker Benefit

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I stood with taxi drivers in Calgary who are frustrated and angry that this government

has left them out of the critical worker benefit. These taxi drivers were also blocked from applying for the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant because their operations were not cancelled or curtailed due to the COVID-19 guidelines. These taxi drivers called this government's practices unfair and demanded help. Now that the critical worker benefit application portal has closed, will the Minister of Finance provide these taxi drivers and other drivers pandemic supports?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As we've spoken about many times in this House, the purpose of the critical worker benefit is to recognize the tremendous work that our health care workers and workers who were providing critical services in the food supply chains and medical supply chains have done during the pandemic. We recognize all of the tremendous work, including taxicab drivers, that in fact all Albertans have continued to do. As you know, more than 80 per cent of Alberta workers continued to work through this pandemic, and we thank them all.

Mr. Sabir: Given that most of the taxi drivers I stood with in Calgary live in the northeast, where their homes and cabs were hammered by the massive hailstorm back in June, and given that most of these taxi drivers had to pay for the hail damage to their cabs out of pocket and given that these taxi drivers and residents of northeast Calgary still have not seen support from this government for that hailstorm, will the minister explain to Albertans why he is ignoring an entire corner of Calgary during this global pandemic?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that folks in northeast Calgary were hit hard by the hailstorm, and again MLAs in northeast Calgary are working with their constituents in ensuring that insurance companies deliver on insurance indemnities. On top of that, we're focused – we're laser focused – on creating the best business environment possible, an environment that will attract investment, provide opportunities for all Albertans, including taxicab drivers in northeastern Calgary.

Mr. Sabir: Given that my colleague and I sent a letter to this government asking for immediate changes to the critical worker benefit and received no reply and given that this government had to set up a separate e-mail to funnel complaints on the critical worker benefit because so many Albertans were angry over the eligibility and given that it took this government 287 days to roll out this program, will the minister admit that he threw together a plan for this benefit without talking to a single labour group, and tell us: why is that?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very excited to roll out the critical worker benefit to Albertans and to thank those Albertans who gave it their all, particularly those in health care, social services, education, grocery store workers, and those supporting our food supply chain and our medical supply chain. The critical worker benefit provided this one-time payment of \$1,200 to over 300,000 eligible workers. It's being put into their pockets. I can say that we have received, just on the private-sector side, more than 12,000 applications. We're processing them right now, and we're getting money into Albertans' pockets.

Support for Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, small and medium-sized businesses are vital in the day-to-day life of the residents of Calgary-Cross, and those businesses are an important economic driver for the province and my constituency. Not only do these family-run businesses create jobs and financial opportunity, but these business owners show the profound work ethic that is Alberta. Recently the Alberta economic recovery plan has been at the forefront of the stage in the COVID-19 pandemic as we see an intent to make a strong economic comeback. Given that the Alberta economic recovery plan is geared towards getting Alberta back running, what is the minister doing to support small and medium-sized business?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small and medium-sized businesses are such an important part of Alberta's economy and such an important part of the fabric of our communities. We have recognized that they've experienced great hardship during this pandemic, and that's why we have provided \$575 million in direct grant funding to small and medium-sized businesses through the SME relaunch grant. This funding will support small businesses to ensure they can meet their payroll, buy supplies, and get back into business.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that there is an opportunity for economic relaunch grants and given that Albertans are still concerned about the viability of their businesses, can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation explain how these grants, supplied by the government, create the chance for Alberta businesses to recover?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly had feedback that these grants have been very helpful to small businesses in a variety of ways. Again, these grants are not prescriptive. Small businesses can use them as they see fit. They can use them to purchase PPE, pay wages, buy supplies, and generally relaunch their businesses. The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation will continue to listen to small-business owners so we can be attentive to their needs and ensure that programming is available.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Albertans are still concerned for their businesses and given that there is still ongoing uncertainty regarding this pandemic, can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation tell Albertans how the recovery strategy will create stability for business owners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with the relief that this government has provided small businesses, we're focused on the Alberta recovery plan to ensure that this province has the most competitive business environment that will attract investment and create opportunities for all Albertans and Alberta businesses. We've been very encouraged because just over the last two weeks

the Bank of Montreal, the National Bank, and the Conference Board of Canada are all predicting that Alberta will lead the country in economic growth in 2021.

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

AgriStability Program

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impacts of COVID-19 have left Alberta's cattle feeders between a rock and a hard place. A study done by the U of C estimates that feedlot revenues are down \$379 million year over year despite beef consumption and retail value being at an all-time high. Given that AgriStability is meant to help manage significant risks and disasters, to the Minister of Agriculture: you have said that you're looking to develop a new margin-based insurance program to replace AgriStability, but what supports and risk-mitigation tools are currently available to this hurting sector?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member opposite for that question. Alberta's government continues to support our farmers and ranchers and agricultural producers. We have spent an average of \$328 million a year to support our farmers and ranchers with our cost-shared BRM programming. That's everything from AgriRecovery, AgriInsurance, AgriInvest, and AgriStability. Producers know that AgriStability is a flawed program. That's why only 3.6 per cent of our producers actually benefit from the program, and we owe it to the other 96.4 per cent of producers to develop a better program.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal agriculture minister is open to making changes to the AgriStability program such as increasing the compensation rate from 70 per cent to 80 per cent and given that a consortium of the main agriculture groups in the province, including the Alberta Beef Producers and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, are in support of the proposed changes to AgriStability, to the same minister: is Alberta, with the help of some neighbouring provinces, going to take the federal minister up on the proposed changes?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta called on the federal government to actually hold a vote on AgriStability, and we are considering the federal government's proposal and looking forward to voting on it this Thursday at the upcoming FPT. But any changes within the five-year joint agreement among the provinces and the federal government actually need a vote among the majority of provinces and agriculture producers across the country. We will fight for the best deal possible for Alberta. Again, we owe it to that 96.4 per cent of producers that did not receive support from AgriStability to design a better program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal ag minister has given the western provinces more time to consider signing on to the new version of AgriStability and given that Alberta's minister of agriculture has lobbied to discuss the new business risk management program with the federal, provincial, and

territorial ag ministers to be included in the policy framework starting in 2023, to the same minister: does Alberta have the support of the other provinces to develop a new program, and if so, when would we be able to roll it out?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been in constant contact with other provinces and the federal government and producers on how to do potential BRM reforms. We are working on a margin-based insurance program for all commodity groups that is actually similar to crop insurance. While the focus right now is on temporary AgriStability changes, we are confident that after the vote on AgriStability, we can actually work on those important structural changes and, again, design a program that is equitable among commodity types; timely, that doesn't take two years for a producer to actually receive supports; and is actually predictable by the industry.

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

In 30 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Liberty and COVID-19 Related Public Health Orders

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our democratic system is the result of long struggles between ideas, kings, and the people. The result is a system of government that pursues ordered liberty. These two words would appear to be in opposition, yet their balanced combination is foundational to peacefully protecting our way of life. Unrestricted liberty results in societal anarchy, and only when individual freedom is bound by reasonable restrictions will there be true freedom for all. Ordered liberty is articulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it says that "the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

Now, freedom is the starting point and the foundation of any democracy, and placing restrictions on our democratic freedoms should never be done lightly, yet it is sometimes necessary. When our freedoms are restricted, those restrictions must meet the standards of reasonableness for a free and democratic society. Recently some constituents exercised their rights and taped a series of posters of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a series of messages all over the front of my constituency office and the town hall of Drayton Valley. They believed that the recent pandemic restrictions placed on Albertans and their businesses are an unreasonable restriction of their Charter rights, and they exercised their right of freedom of speech.

Now, the government has argued that it has a duty to protect both lives and livelihoods of Albertans and that the temporary restrictions were to protect life by temporarily placing restrictions on Albertans in order to safeguard access to emergency care. Albertans are split on this issue. There is a clear right to disagree in our society, which is part of a strong democracy. I will defend the right to disagree, and I will continue to bring my constituents' concerns forward as their MLA and in the process ensure an ordered liberty.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 61

Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2021

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 61, the Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2021. You may recall that last year we introduced legislation to ensure that convicted sex offenders could never change their names and hide from their past and hide in our communities, and we did that to protect Albertans and to keep Alberta families and Alberta communities safe. Well, today I am pleased to announce that I am tabling legislation that will expand those protections to ensure that dangerous offenders, long-term offenders, and high-risk offenders will also not be allowed to go through a legal change of name in Alberta. This is an important next step to ensure that we are protecting Alberta families and protecting Alberta communities.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 61 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Calgary-North.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from Calgary Stampede supporting my private member's Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act. I would like to thank them and all the stakeholders who have voiced their support in making rodeo Alberta's official sport.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed to consideration of Government Motion 69.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

69. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

1. A Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights be established and consist of the following members: Mr. Sigurdson, chair; Mr. Rutherford, deputy chair; Ms Ganley; Ms Glasgo; Ms Goodridge; Mr. Hanson; Mr. Milliken; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Orr; Mr. Rowsell; Mr. Schmidt; and Ms Sweet.

2. The committee's mandate is limited to consideration of the following matters:

- (a) whether the legal remedies available to a real property owner who is deprived of the use of their real property are adequate;
- (b) whether the real property rights should be expanded, or in the case of an individual, constitutionally protected;

- (c) whether the law of adverse possession should be abolished;
 - (d) whether the expropriation processes provided under the Expropriation Act are adequate;
 - (e) any other matter that the committee decides is necessary to ensure the completeness of its review;
3. The committee may, if it considers it relevant to its mandate, review any part of the following acts, including any regulation made under that act:
- (a) Alberta Bill of Rights;
 - (b) Alberta Land Stewardship Act;
 - (c) Expropriation Act;
 - (d) Land Titles Act;
 - (e) Law of Property Act;
 - (f) Limitations Act;
 - (g) Responsible Energy Development Act;
 - (h) any other act, a review of which the committee determines is necessary to ensure completeness of its review;
4. During the course of its review the committee
- (a) continues despite a prorogation of a session of the 30th Legislature, and
 - (b) may, without leave of the Assembly, meet during a period when the Assembly is prorogued;
5. The committee may, subject to the chair's approval, pay any reasonable costs necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities, specifically the costs of advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other similar costs;
6. The committee may, during the course of its review, utilize the services of any of the following:
- (a) Legislative Assembly Office employees, or
 - (b) subject to the approval of the head of a department or an office of the Legislature, the public service employees of that department or office;
7. No later than December 15, 2021, the committee must submit a report to the Assembly that sets out its recommendations, if any;
8. If the Assembly is not sitting on the day that the committee completes its report, the chair of the committee must, as soon as practicable
- (a) deposit the report with the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 38.1, and
 - (b) provide a copy of the report to each Member of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government Motion 69 is on the Order Paper in my name. I think it's fairly self-explanatory and I believe has the support of all members of the Chamber.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 69 carried]

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

Bill 212 Official Sport of Alberta Act

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to my private member's Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act. First I would like to thank Mr. Jeff Robson from the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association, CPRA; Mayor Depew of the town of Raymond; Mr. Ryan Schmidt, CEO and general manager of the Strathmore and area agricultural society; and the Calgary Stampede for its supporting or speaking so passionately about rodeo, its cultural significance, its importance to our cultural sector, animal welfare, and its substantial economic impact for Alberta. Rodeo deserves to be recognized in legislation.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, the cultural importance of rodeo to rural Alberta cannot be overstated. When visitors come from across Alberta, the country, and the world to participate in rodeo events, it gives Alberta a chance to welcome people from different backgrounds and it creates a sense of community, belonging, and friendship. The sport of rodeo is a key part of Alberta's rich cultural fabric that highlights Alberta's historic agriculture sector.

To give members of the House an idea of the impact rodeo and its agricultural events have on Alberta, I wish to mention a few. There are 94 primary agricultural societies, seven regional agricultural societies, and one major agricultural society that hold a whopping 138-plus rodeos, which are spread out across our great province. The first Canadian rodeo was held in Raymond, Alberta in 1903, two years before our province came into being. The first stampede, the Calgary Stampede, quickly followed in 1912, which attracted 75,000 spectators, nearly double the city's population at that time. Now, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Stampede has grown to over one million visitors yearly and is the largest outdoor rodeo, which gives you an idea of the attraction it brings to Alberta.

The stampede alone has an economic impact of \$283 million. Mr. Speaker, Rockyford, a small town of 325, hosts a three-day event that on its busiest day seats about 1,500 in the stands, which has the potential for revenue of up to \$50,000, that typically goes to the Lions Club, a local community organization. The town of Strathmore has a \$4 million economic impact that many local businesses use as a chance to sell their services and merchandise. The Canadian Finals Rodeo has an economic impact of \$37 million while the Ponoka Stampede has an economic impact of \$10 million.

Mr. Speaker, my connections to rodeo started when I had the opportunity to live in rural Alberta through my oil and gas work, where I came to know many hard-working and passionate people who have dedicated their lives to agriculture in this province. Recognizing the roots of rodeo is essential in understanding the commitment, drive, expertise, compassion, and skills of cowboys and cowgirls. Alberta is my home, and it has been for over 40 years. Here I learned and experienced a culture of hospitality and collaboration, with rodeo being the most favourite sport.

At its heart, Mr. Speaker, rodeo is about community. Rodeos and stampedes are not just about competition and the demonstration of skill but about coming together to enjoy food from local artisans, farmers' markets, listening to local singers, enjoying trade shows, and visiting the rides at the fairgrounds. Rodeo brings together people from all walks of life and all different backgrounds, immigrants like myself and new Albertans from other parts of Canada and people who have been here for generations.

I believe that making rodeo Alberta's official sport would help illustrate the importance of rodeo to our province and to our local communities, who work year-round preparing for the rodeo season. Families, agricultural associations, local businesses, community associations, and individuals rely on income they make from the rodeo season. Our love for rodeo is something that we share as

Albertans, and I want that to be officially recognized in legislation. It is no secret that the COVID pandemic has interrupted and put on hold so many plans, but this bill will be a beacon of hope for Albertans as we make our way through another year and serve as a reminder that we have much to look forward to. Rodeo is not just about competition but about identity, income, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, about culture.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to talk about animal welfare. Before and after every rodeo the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association, CPRA, requires that rodeo associations submit stats, injuries on both human and animal athletes, and it also requires an inspection of rodeo grounds before participants arrive. The CPRA takes their duty to animal welfare very seriously, and it ensures that where the animals are loaded and unloaded are well kept, of quality, and reach the high standards that are outlined. The rodeo is also held to high standards under the Animal Protection Act of Alberta. I believe that members of the rodeo, whether that be associations, participants, or spectators, deeply care for the well-being of these incredible animal athletes.

I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this bill as it truly highlights Alberta's historic cultural heritage and creates a sense of belonging and community. Thank you, and yee-haw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak to the motion for concurrence? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, followed by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that it's a little bit strange that we're having this debate today. Really, it's a little bit strange because I simply cannot understand why the government and the UCP are debating concurrence on their own private member's bill when all UCP members on the private members' committee supported that the bill proceed. Now, I recognize that concurrence debates happen quite often when the committee decides that a bill should not proceed and should not be debated and when some members of this place think that it should proceed. Oftentimes we use this as an opportunity to argue to the Assembly that this is a matter that should be debated in the House, but the committee said that it should be debated, and then a UCP member, not an opposition member, rises in this place and says that they want to debate the concurrence.

I sit on the standing committee that tabled this report. My colleague from Edmonton-Decore actually articulated our opposition to it, and if members would like to see what was said, they can look at *Hansard*. But we didn't ask for this debate, and I see no need for this matter of concurrence. In fact, the hon. member that introduced the bill himself, when he rose in this place and spoke to the concurrence issue – I didn't hear the word "concurrence" once. It sounded more like a second reading speech, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think this debate is necessary, I don't think it's a good use of our time today, and I think that the UCP needs to look at and understand what the rules of this place are and why we need to debate certain things in this place and what they choose to prioritize. Again, Mr. Speaker, a UCP member asked for a debate that nobody else asks for, that they've already indicated they support concurrence for, and then instead take up time that could be used to debate other bills in this place. I encourage members of the Assembly not to waste our time, not to waste the time of the House on a procedural matter, and rather instead debate the business that's already on the Order Paper.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others wishing to speak to concurrence? The hon. the Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 212, the Official Sport of Alberta Act, in concurrence here today. I felt a little bit like a homer speaking in support of this. Rodeo was a big part of my life growing up in my community, and I like the words from my colleague from Calgary-North about his time in the east country travelling down those roads and seeing how important it was to those communities. I definitely could feel that. As a person that's come from that background, I just wanted to note that in 2008, I believe, the Liberal leader Kevin Taft proposed a private member's motion that read very much the same, that was also carried by the House of that day but not enacted. Seeing as how he was from Edmonton-Riverview and we now have Calgary-North, I don't feel so bad showing my bias in support of this from Drumheller-Stettler.

3:00

I guess I just wanted to comment that, you know, a lot of people probably first hear of rodeo and wanting it to be the official sport and think of professional rodeo or what they've seen on TV or the Calgary Stampede or the CFR. I immediately think of gymkhanas, 4-H rodeos, the many high school rodeos and college rodeos all across this province, spread out amongst all of our ridings – that's where my head immediately goes – and then of the families that help those kids compete and hone their skills and get older and better and learn their own skills and horsemanship and of the communities that put those rodeos and events on, the ag societies and the different rodeo committees that put in thousands upon thousands of hours just to put a successful event together in their hometown. It really is the cultural fabric across the province, as the Member for Calgary-North stated.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I just would like to comment, while I'm speaking about those groups that put these on, you know, that they're having a very hard time right now, and a lot of what happens – as we come out of COVID here as a province, we'll need to watch those ag societies and those groups and make sure they have the support necessary to put these events back on. It's one of those things that does require bums in seats and attendance, so I'm sure there'll be some creative thinking out there on how they can pursue those and get those events going.

It's a big tourist boon, as the member stated, not just the Calgary Stampede. I've met people from all over the world, and they know about Alberta, they know about the Calgary Stampede, and they know that the events of rodeo represent, you know, the cultural beginnings of that horse culture and early pioneer days. If anyone has ever heard of Bob Tallman, the announcer from Texas: we were lucky to have him be the announcer at our event in Pollockville. He takes it right back to the beginning, that these events started by people honing their craft and doing the things they did every day and saying, "Oh, I betcha I can stay on that horse longer than you," or "My horse is faster" or "Let's see who can rope the calf the quickest." That's how it began. It speaks to the beginning of Alberta as a province since 1905.

I just would like to go on a little tangent for a second. I was reading a children's book to my daughter, that she was quite taken with. I kind of take the story of John Ware for granted a little bit, being very close to the Duchess-Millicent Dinosaur park area. They came out with a very good book. I believe the Alberta author was from – oh, I might butcher this – Crossfield maybe. She came out with this great new book, and it was highlighted through a lot of our

libraries during Black History Month, the story of John Ware. I think it was called *Howdy, I'm John Ware*, a great story about his time post American Civil War, breaking out west, starting out as a very green ranch hand, getting a chance to hone his skills and actually get on a horse and learn that he had a real natural aptitude for riding the rough ones, coming to Alberta on a cattle drive, and then eventually making Alberta his new home and becoming a historical icon for this province even though he died in 1905, when we first became a province.

I bring him up because one of the events of this conglomerate that we know as rodeo is steer wrestling, and it's commonly thought that John Ware was the inventor of steer wrestling. It's just one of those things that kind of comes full circle when I think about Alberta and the stories.

We have some of the best stock and cowboys and cowgirls from around the world. Even in my riding, where there aren't a lot of people, you know, we have world champions, from Zeke Thurston of Big Valley to Blaine Pederson of Amisk, and some of the best bucking horses and bulls in the world. I know that my wife's grandfather was a professional stock contractor, and I had the pleasure of taking him to Las Vegas the last time he could go to the NFR and show off his bucking horses. I don't recommend that anyone spend 11 days in Las Vegas, like I did. It's not healthy for anyone, but it was quite a tribute to him and his life and that he cared so much for these horses and representing our province and area while they were down there, abroad and absolutely renowned.

As far as speaking to this in concurrence today, you know, it may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I do think it speaks to our cultural history. I think that the sport of rodeo would make a great official sport. I'm happy to show my support for it today, and I know there are some other members that would like to speak. I thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North for the opportunity.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion for concurrence? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House and support concurrence of Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, introduced by my colleague the Member for Calgary-North. The bill makes rodeo the official sport of Alberta, and it recognizes the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agriculture events.

I have the privilege of representing both rural and urban constituents. Rodeo is appreciated by Albertans from all different walks of life. Rodeo has a history in Alberta dating back to before we were even a province. The first major rodeo was in 1902 in Raymond, Alberta. In 1912 the first Calgary Stampede was held, but its roots date back to 1886, and agriculture has remained the heart of the Stampede since its earliest days. Agriculture has been an important part of the Calgary Stampede from the very beginning. It's also known as the greatest outdoor show on earth. The Calgary Stampede has had, between 1912 and 2015, over 67 million people visit it. Of the total Stampede visitors, 66 per cent of them will take in the ag zone during their visits. The event, to this day, still has a strong commitment to the rural communities and reflects the important role agriculture plays in Alberta's economy.

I choose to live and raise my family in a rural community, and rodeo plays a big part. I'm proud of the hard-working men and women that earn their livelihood in the agricultural industry, men and women that care about their communities and give back in so many different ways.

Every year it seems that many ag producers are under question, some may say attack, for the perception of how their animals are treated, from outsiders not involved in the industry on a day-to-day basis. I want it to be known that treating animals with respect and care is an important part of how western heritage and values are celebrated. The producers I know take a disciplined approach to animal care and accept responsibility for the welfare of animals. Their relationship with their animals is far more than just about money. They live and work around these animals every day, and they have a high degree of respect and appreciation for their livestock. There are strict rules and regulations in place around animal welfare, and the producers pledge to continue their enforcement.

The importance of rodeo to Alberta has been raised by Members of the Legislative Assembly before. In 2008, when speaking about rodeo, MLA Taft declared, "No other sport carries such a deep connection to our province's land and wildlife, and that connection has played a huge role in Alberta's economic growth and cultural development." Quite recently the MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright introduced a motion, in 2020, on the cultural importance of rodeo and its related agricultural events.

Over the years the crowds and the prize money have grown, but the events remain rooted in Alberta history, values, and community spirit. Each of the rodeos across the province is made great by the men and women who give their time to ensure that the events are a success. The Calgary Stampede, for example, has started and remained a volunteer organization, with 130 volunteers in the 1920s, and today it has over 2,500 volunteers. Their time and help make this event a success.

The Calgary Stampede is also known as the greatest outdoor show on earth, but it is by no means the only Alberta rodeo event. In my particular area there is the Hairy Hill Rodeo. The Lamont summer sizzler rodeo and the Bruce Stampede are among many Alberta rodeos that are the heart and soul of their communities. These events, of course, include rodeo but also include agrifood, chuckwagons, horse shows, livestock competitions, the celebration of western agriculture heritage, western events, and western performance horse. These events give children and adults alike a chance to showcase their skills and to remember the proud traditions of the past. Through these events rodeo helps preserve our culture and the history of the west.

3:10

In 1912, 1 in 3 visitors to the Stampede had a direct connection to agriculture, large animals, and the ranching way of life. By 2011 the same statistic had shifted to 1 in 60. The nonprofit Stampede has grown steadily into a successful heritage, education, and entertainment organization with more than a million visitors annually. As our culture and our industries continue to evolve, it is increasingly important that we do not forget our past.

The passing of Bill 212 is of importance to my riding. Generation after generation has taken their families to the rodeo. Seeing these events disappear from the Alberta landscape would be an erosion of our culture. I'm voting in favour of this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure today for me to rise and to speak to concurrence with Bill 212, the Official Sport of Alberta Act. I grew up in the city, but I know that every one of my aunts, every one of my uncles, all of my grandparents, all of my cousins, everybody of significance in my family grew up

on the farm. They were either farmers or ranchers. For me growing up, rodeo was just a part of life. It was just a part of who we were.

You know, I think it speaks to what we are like as a people in Alberta. One of the things that we understand in this amazing experiment that we have as an Alberta society is that we come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures and languages and religions. Sometimes, Madam Speaker, it's important for us to recognize the things that are traditional, the things that we do have a history with, the things that bind many of us together. One of those things, I believe, is rodeo. We celebrate a lot of uniquenesses in Alberta, and this is one of them, rodeo. It's a part of our western culture, and, yes – I hate to break it to the people of this country and around the world – there is a western culture, and Alberta is a part of that western culture, and rodeo is a part, one small part, of that western culture.

I stand here today very happy and very pleased to be able to support this private member's bill, Bill 212, and to argue for bringing it before the House and allowing us as private members to be able to stand up and to support a part of our western culture and a part of being Albertan, as far as I'm concerned. You know, if I travel around the world – and I've done a little bit, not a huge amount, but I've done some. My son is now living in Montreal, and when I go to Montreal, there are not many people in Montreal that have ridden the back of a horse, let alone tried to get on one that was less than wanting them to be there. They don't have a real clear understanding of what rodeo is really all about. It speaks to the uniqueness of this idea in Alberta, in our culture. Now, many people, when I was travelling in Europe, didn't understand or had never participated in or had never even seen a rodeo outside of maybe a little clip on the TV. It's a time for us in this province to be able to, in this Legislature, sit down and have a conversation about making rodeo the provincial sport and the official sport of Alberta.

Now, you know, Madam Speaker, as I alluded to earlier, this is really, for me, a part of my family history. My grandfather emigrated from the United States into Canada around the turn of the century, around 1910, and he homesteaded. Well, first he was a trapper and worked in the timber industry in B.C., and then he got a letter from his brother saying: come on out to Saskatchewan; we're going to homestead together. That's how my family came from Ohio and into Saskatchewan. You know, when I was growing up, we used to go on holidays, and we would tour Saskatchewan and Alberta, and we would often hit all of the little rodeos that were somewhere around Alberta and Saskatchewan and western Canada. It was just something that I grew up being a part of.

I can remember. My great-aunt lived to be into her 90s. I had a great-aunt on my mom's side of the family. Her name was Aunt Minnie, and she was deaf. One of the only ways that we could really sit down and make a relationship and communicate was that she would bring out her old photo albums, and we would sit down and we would take a look at the photo albums. It was amazing how many of those pictures revolved around a western, rural, agricultural, and ranching way of life. She had pictures, original pictures, from the Calgary Stampede of about, like, 1916, 1917, somewhere in there, and you could see some of the first original cowboys from the Calgary Stampede that she had attended when she was a young girl.

You know, I told you that I grew up in the city, so the only time I had the chance to ride a horse or to be a part of this was when we had summer holidays, and I would go out to the farm and spend a lot of my time on the farm and on the ranches of my aunts and uncles. It was kind of funny. When I moved to Drayton Valley and I was teaching – I had just got a job teaching in Drayton Valley – one of the families in our church owned a cattle company, and they

invited this city slicker out to do the branding. I thought: great; I'd love to do this. I'd been out to a couple of brandings on the farm and stuff like that, and I'd had the chance to go pick up the calves from the field and wipe them down and do that kind of stuff, but here was my chance to get involved in the branding.

So they took this city slicker and they decided that they would rope the calf, and then I was supposed to run down the rope and grab that calf and put it up in the air and down on the ground and then kneel on the neck. Somebody would get the back end, and then they would do the castrating and the branding. That's a lot harder than it looks, especially when you're about 135 pounds soaking wet at the time – I've put on a little weight – and you're trying to lift that calf up while it's bucking around and running around and you're trying to get it down on the ground. I think they had the best time of their life laughing at the city slicker. You know, by the end of that day they fed us, and I went to my car to try to open up the door. I was so sore and my muscles were so cramped that I had to lift up the handle with two hands on my door to my car. It's not an easy thing, this rodeo stuff, bulldogging those cattle and those calves.

I look at this sport and I look at the sport of rodeo and I go: this is Alberta. This speaks to our way of life in the rural areas of our province, and I think that it's a really important thing that we as private members get the opportunity to be able to speak to making this the official sport of Alberta. You know, when I take a look at my constituency, I see rodeos in Thorsby and Drayton Valley and Buck Lake. I've attended rodeos in Winfield. I've attended rodeos all over this province, from small to large. I've been to the Calgary Stampede, and growing up every winter there was the Canadian Finals Rodeo. My family religiously got tickets to the Canadian Finals Rodeo for the entire week. So when I look at this, I see this is a part of who we are as Albertans.

As a teacher for 30-plus years I know that many of the kids in my high school, Frank Maddock high school in Drayton Valley – we had our own high school rodeo, and many of these kids got their start in rodeo through the high school Rodeo Club. Some of them actually have ended up competing in the Calgary Stampede. Let me tell you, for anybody that's ever been a teacher, that when you see your kids rise to excellence – and I don't care what it is. I don't care whether it's in music. I don't care whether it's in choir. I don't care if it's in basketball. I especially think of rodeo, where these kids have excelled. It just makes your heart as a teacher just go: that's why we're in this job. That's why we do the things that we do, to try to help our kids to excel. Rodeo, for many of the high school kids in this province, is one of the ways that they can excel.

Madam Speaker, it gives me a great deal of joy today to stand up for a few minutes and to be able to support this idea of speaking to private member's Bill 212, that would, if passed, make rodeo the official sport of Alberta. I would speak to having that debate in this House.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

3:20

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on concurrence of Bill 212? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I as well am very excited and happy to be able to stand up and speak in support of concurrence for Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-North for bringing this to the House. I mean, when we think about this way of life that was historic for so many Albertans that grew up here, our founding

fathers, that has grown into a sport, I think that almost is an explanation in itself of why it should be the official sport of Alberta.

I mean, in reality rodeo culture is a way of life that touches all of us as Albertans. Of any sport currently played, Alberta rodeo is the sport that truly embodies Alberta's sense of community and heritage. Whether it's going to your local small-town rodeo like the Okotoks rodeo or Guy Weadick Days in High River or going to the greatest outdoor show on Earth like the Calgary Stampede, many residents of this province understand here that rodeo is much, much more than just the eight seconds a cowboy tries to stay on a horse or a bull or the 15 seconds that it takes for a barrel racer to round the barrels. It's a unique sporting event that connects us as Albertans. That is why you can almost guarantee that the majority of every single person that lives here in Alberta has at least one cowboy hat and a pair of boots tucked away in their closet somewhere.

The majority of Albertans feel confident enough to embrace this culture that comes with rodeo. The reality is that these weekend or week-long spans, like the Calgary Stampede, where Albertans get to embrace the culture of rodeo actually is, in my personal opinion, not nearly enough time to show our full recognition and significance of the rodeo culture here in our province. Rodeo is a bridge that connects urban and rural and connects agriculture to everyone in our province.

Rodeo is a sport that also relies on more than just the athletes who actually wear a cowboy hat. Many of the stars that make this sport what it is are the livestock and the horses. Events like bareback, saddle bronc, or bull riding: 50 per cent of the score comes from the performance of that livestock. To add to this, in tie-down roping, steer wrestling, barrel racing, and chuckwagon racing your success depends on the love, care, training, and partnership you establish with your horse or horses.

Now, as many in rural Alberta have, I grew up around rodeo. There are few small-town rodeos that I have yet to attend. There's no denying that this stemmed from the feeling my dad had for rodeo, a feeling of love for the sport that him and I share. Additionally, this came from my father's vision to bring emergency care and sports medicine to the sport in the early '80s. Those in the industry that knew him understood that this was not about an opportunity to just start a company; this was about the sense of connection he felt towards this sport, thus he transitioned from working for the Calgary city EMS, purchased two old ambulances, and started providing ALS and BLS care and sports medicine to rodeos. Now, due to this, I spent many weekends hanging from the fence of arenas at local rodeos all across Alberta. For many years, almost 10 years in a row, I stayed on the grounds of the Calgary Stampede, spending every single day with them in the infield medical shack. His care, innovation, and love for the sport was recognized in 1995 when he was inducted as a pioneer of rodeo by the Calgary Stampede.

Now, for many who have never had the opportunity to be behind the bucking chutes or hang out in the chuckwagon barns, the sense of camaraderie and community contained within the sport is hard to fully illustrate. I've seen participants loan their personal rigging to another cowboy. I've even witnessed a cowboy loan his horse to a competitor so that he could actually compete in the same event against him. As a province our affection and sense of connection to this sport comes from more than just the day of rodeo. It stems from the cabarets, parades, and the way that it brings our entire communities and province together. These weekend showcases are an important economic driver for small communities, ag societies, and charities. Whether you're a stock contractor, feed supplier, trucking company, or a small business in the community . . .

Mr. Dang: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition deputy House leader.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under point of order 23(b), speaks to matters other than the question under discussion. I understand, of course, that a wide amount of leeway is used in these debates and that certainly members have been speaking quite broadly this afternoon, but I've listened quite intently to my hon. colleague's comments today, and I don't believe he's mentioned the word "concurrence" once, and on top of that, I think that certainly this is something that I would be happy to hear about in second reading. However, it appears that the UCP is intending to use the matter of concurrence as a means to debate Bill 212 ahead of its ordained order instead of bringing other bills that would normally be on the Order Paper forward and to use their second reading speeches in this concurrence phase.

That is simply not the intent of this debate, Madam Speaker. The intent of this debate would be to debate the committee report which was tabled by the private members' bills committee, of which I am a member and many of my colleagues on opposition and government sides are members. Unless the members opposite are speaking to this committee report and why we should or should not agree and concur with this report, then I would contest that they are out of order as they are speaking to something else.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In terms of concurrence, in terms of understanding whether or not we should continue on this, it is up to this side to be able to make sure that they show that there is a reason for concurrence. In fact, I would suggest that the data that is being applied here not only shows the importance of rodeo but all of the other important pieces that rodeo applies to, which is hugely impactful to this province. I'm not quite sure how a point of order could have even been called here considering that the facts that are being laid here are specifically related to concurrence.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I'm not sure it's up to the Speaker to decide which sets of facts or ideas or opinions in which one member would make a decision. It is quite usual on a motion for concurrence to hear this type of debate. While I will remind all members of this House that we are on the motion for concurrence on Bill 212, I do not find a point of order.

I will now ask the hon. Member for Highwood to continue with his debate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll get right to it. I'll speak to concurrence, and I apologize. I'm very passionate about rodeo, as many on this side are. We can see that the others on the other side may not be so passionate toward rodeo. I was trying to highlight why I would like to continue to see the debate happen for Bill 212, and I'll get straight to it.

The history of the sport is deep in Alberta. It's an intertwined part of our province. From the early days of the Raymond rodeo to the founding four of the Calgary Stampede, our province has a storied

past. Overall, it's clear that Albertans do not hesitate to welcome the culture by rodeos, so I would like to proceed with concurrence and continue to debate more on Bill 212.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the concurrence motion on Bill 212? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Jones: Great memory, Madam Speaker.

One of the staples of Alberta's culture and heritage is rodeo. The first major Canadian rodeo opened in 1902 in Raymond, Alberta. However, these events were not officially known as rodeo until 1945. Until then they were known as frontier days or cowboy contests. Modern rodeo is the product of the 19th century rancher networking in the American southwest and Mexico, where cattle owners would meet for business.

Rodeos are held in over 100 communities across Alberta. In 1912 our famous Calgary Stampede, one of my favourites, was launched. The Calgary Stampede is known internationally as one of the best rodeos in the world. In fact, individuals from all over the world come to Calgary just for the Stampede. When you mention Calgary, it's hard not to think about this world-renowned festival.

Rodeo isn't just a good time that allows communities to gather. The reality is that rodeo provides significant economic benefits to communities all across our province. Rodeos have a combined economic impact of over \$300 million. The Calgary Stampede alone has an economic impact of \$282 million while other rodeos such as the Canadian Rodeo Finals in Red Deer have an economic impact of almost \$40 million. It's pretty significant.

3:30

The economic impact that rodeos have on local communities is essential. Rockyford, a small town of approximately 325, hosts a three-day rodeo event that on its busiest day seats 1,500 people in the stands. In addition, approximately \$50,000 made from food sales goes to the Lions Club and local community organizations. I would also like to note that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry provides \$1.2 million in annual grant funding for reimbursement of eligible agricultural activity by primary agriculture societies, which includes amateur rodeo.

I would like to point out further that the Fair Deal Panel recommended that Alberta's government should immediately explore all ways and means to affirm Alberta's cultural, economic, and political uniqueness in law and government policy. This bill, in a small way, would do that, which is why I support the concurrence of this bill. Making rodeo Alberta's official sport would help illustrate the importance of rodeo to our province and to our local communities who work year-round preparing for the rodeo season. Individuals, families, local businesses, and community associations rely on the income they make from the rodeo season.

I want to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North for bringing this private member's bill forward. Rodeo isn't just an event; it brings Albertans together. It's a celebration of Alberta's culture, hometown pride, and the success of our agricultural industry. I support all of my hon. colleagues to vote in favour of concurrence.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand as I am supporting concurrence for the Member for Calgary-North's bill. I, first of all, want to speak about my

passion for rodeos. Growing up as a little girl – I've mentioned in this Chamber before stories about my grandfather when he was alive, packing us all up in the car and saying: girls, we're heading off to the rodeo. That was always the highlight of our summer, attending those rodeos together as a family. I look forward to having that opportunity with my family again this summer, when we can safely gather.

Alberta has a long history of rodeo. In fact, the first major Canadian rodeo opened in 1902 in Raymond, Alberta. Interestingly enough, these events were not officially known as rodeo until 1945. Rodeos are held in over 100 communities across Alberta, and, Madam Speaker, I'm sure we're all aware of the most notable rodeo, the beloved Calgary Stampede. According to *AMA Insider*, "for top competitors today, the sport has become quite lucrative: prize pools have grown from \$300,000 spread over 50 rodeos in 1970 to more than \$5 million in 2014."

I do, however, have to make clear that in my constituency of Camrose we are proud to host the Camrose Spring Classic Pro Rodeo. First established in 1989, the Camrose Spring Classic Pro Rodeo is a breathtaking event which draws over 400 participants and 5,500 spectators annually from across western Canada and the United States. Cowboys and cowgirls compete in six major events: saddle bronc riding, bare bronc riding, bull riding, tie-down roping, steer wrestling, and ladies' barrel racing. Throughout the Camrose constituency we are blessed to have the Hardisty Rodeo and the Tofteld Sodbuster Rodeo. I'd like to mention the Bruce Stampede, one of Canada's oldest stampedes, which was first hosted in 1914.

However, Madam Speaker, rodeo isn't just a fun event that brings Albertans together; rodeo provides significant economic benefits to the communities across the province. Here's a fun fact: rodeos have a combined economic impact of over \$330 million. Isn't that amazing? From the government side of things the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry provides millions of dollars in grants to agriculture societies that host events such as rodeo. Additionally, on January 28, 2021, the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women launched the \$17 million stabilize program, which 100 rodeo organizations were eligible for, including some in my constituency.

Here in Canada our official winter sport is ice hockey, with our official summer sport being lacrosse. Did you also know that Saskatchewan's official sport is curling? It's been like that since 2001. It's time for Alberta to follow suit and recognize our official sport. It's no secret that Albertans love these sports dearly, but let's be honest. Rodeo is just as close to our hearts.

I want to thank my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North for bringing this private member bill forward. In his own words he says that rural culture is a culture of hospitality and collaboration, a culture of generosity and co-operation, with rodeo being the most favourite sport. Nothing could be more accurate. Rodeo isn't just an event. It's what brings Albertans together. It's what connects the generational Albertan to the new Albertan. It's what brings communities together for a shared celebration of our culture, hometown pride, and the success of our own agriculture industry. This isn't the first time that we've seen Albertans recognize that rodeo is an inherent part of Alberta's diverse culture. A previous motion sought to do the same, but as legislators we know that motions are not binding. It's time to officially recognize what we wanted for a long time, that rodeo is Alberta's official sport.

I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this amazing bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate on a concurrence motion for Bill 212? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in this House and speak to the motion for concurrence on Bill 212, the Official Sport of Alberta Act, introduced by the Member for Calgary-North. I understood there were a number of speakers. I suspect we're running out of time, so I'll do my best not to take up too much time.

I felt that I would be remiss if I didn't stand in support of rodeo and certainly in support of this motion for concurrence given that there is a rodeo in my constituency of Grande Prairie and given the economic impact and the cultural impact in my riding, in my constituency. So I'll just give a little bit of background on why this matters to my constituents.

Rodeo is certainly a long-standing part of Canadian culture and tradition, with rodeo competitions hosted right across the country, of course, the majority of them here in the west. I support concurrence on this bill, and I understand that there wasn't unanimous support at committee, so I really wanted to stand in support of this today. I believe that this bill, should it meet the threshold for concurrence today, will serve to formalize our recognition of rodeo and its roots in Alberta. Ultimately, if this bill were to pass, we would be declaring rodeo the official sport of Alberta and recognize its importance in our province. With this simple recognition, I believe we would help to preserve and celebrate our western heritage and culture as well as bolster community spirit in rodeo communities, both large and small, right across Alberta. For that reason, again, I am pleased to stand in support of the motion for concurrence and, ultimately, in support of this bill.

While I didn't personally grow up attending the rodeo, my family heritage on both sides is in agriculture, and many of my ancestors felt a direct connection to the rodeo circuit because of their work as farmers and their involvement with their respective ag societies over the years. I have fond memories of watching bull riding, for example, with my grandfather – may he rest in peace – and learning about his childhood on the farm as he shared stories throughout those afternoons together. I also had the incredible privilege of attending the 100th anniversary of the Calgary Stampede in 2012 with my late father-in-law. That trip became our last family outing together with him, and I will always cherish the look on his face as he cheered on the chucks.

Madam Speaker, as I've mentioned, within my own family we can see that rodeos are part of the unique lifestyle and heritage, and these traditions have been handed down throughout generations, so I think it would be very appropriate for this House to pass concurrence and consider this bill for debate. I believe that it is very pertinent to Alberta's heritage and also would be very appropriate for this sport to be declared Alberta's sport.

Modern rodeo, as many have said, grew out of 19th century rancher networking in the American southwest and Mexico. Back in that day cattle owners would meet for business and test their pioneering abilities and skills against one another. Also, as many have mentioned today, 1902, I learned, was the first major Canadian rodeo, and it was in Raymond, Alberta. I did not know that until I prepared for this speech today. By 1912 the Calgary Stampede had launched and rodeo was well on its way here in this province, celebrating well over a hundred years.

Today I believe rodeo remains key to our Albertan identity, with rodeos held in over a hundred communities across the province, and our most famous rodeo, as many have mentioned, the Calgary Stampede. I grew up as a little girl not knowing where Calgary was but knowing that there was a Stampede there, so there you go. I've loved attending it the several times that I've had the opportunity to do so, love being at the greatest outdoor show on Earth. Certainly, it's one of the largest events that I've been to in person and one of the most famous things that Canada offers, I think, on the national

and international stage. Cowboys perform for tens of thousands of fans daily. I remember my father-in-law getting his Calgary Stampede hat and being so proud. He didn't speak English, so he was thrilled to walk around looking like an Albertan. Certainly, it was quite the show for us that afternoon on the 100th anniversary, and we loved being there in person.

3:40

Rodeo is appreciated by Albertans from all different walks of life. Small-town rodeos, like the one in my community, in my opinion, are just as thrilling as the big show in Calgary, hosting many of the same cowboys and events but with smaller crowds. These rodeos create economic spinoff in their respective communities. They maintain that hometown feel, supporting communities and providing access to the experience in an up-close-and-personal way for locals.

I've thoroughly enjoyed taking my children over the years to Grande Prairie's Stompede, connecting them to their familial roots as well. Each year rodeos are held in over 100 communities across Alberta, and Grande Prairie, in my constituency, has been hosting this Stompede since 1977. In 2014 Stompede celebrated its millionth visitor, which I thought was remarkable, and Stompede has been a tradition of western culture and a community staple since its inception. It occurs every May and marks the start of summer and the beginning of the official rodeo season. Stompede occurs over a five-day period, and in recent years there have been over 50,000 people attending the rodeo during this time. So you can see, Madam Speaker, why I would stand in support of concurrence given how important it is to my constituents, not only this historical event, the heritage that it represents, and the tradition that it is but also the economic driver that it's become over the years and a way for communities to come together.

Events you would typically see at the Grande Prairie Stompede include the rodeo, pony chuckwagon racing, thoroughbred chuckwagon racing, and, of course, the midway. There's truly something for everyone there, making Stompede an annual highlight for my family and many Grande Prairie families.

The positive economic impact of Stompede within our region is also notable as many others have commented. Again, in support of concurrence I would say that this is bigger than just sport; this is an economic driver across our province, and it's a cultural reminder of our past and history, what was part of building Alberta. In Grande Prairie this impact has been tabulated at close to \$7 million annually in economic spinoff, including job creation. The event continues to be a draw for visitors from across the province, B.C., and abroad. I love the opportunity for Grande Prairie to be considered a tourism attraction, which it often is not, so that's also an added bonus.

With agricultural societies hosting rodeos right across our province, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to highlight the support provided by Alberta's government to those societies. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for administering over \$11 million annually for these ag societies in grant programs and, in addition, almost \$3 million in annual grant funding to be shared between the seven regional ag societies. The role of these societies is to encourage improvement in agriculture as well as enhance the quality of life based on the needs of the community, and this most certainly includes rodeo.

Again, that's why I stand in support of concurrence, seeing how important it is. From the north to the south, the east to the west, right across Alberta I believe it's very relevant to the communities right across our province. With rodeo being this important and historic, such a large component of the western way of life, I will close by reiterating my support for this motion and ultimately for

Bill 212 and will take this opportunity to once again thank my colleague the Member for Calgary-North for bringing it forward.

With that, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join the motion for concurrence on Bill 212?

Seeing none, would the deputy chair of Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills like to close debate? Up to five minutes. Thank you. The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Sure. Not the deputy chair but the chair of the private members' committee. I'd like to thank all members who supported this. I'd like to thank the members on the government side as well as those who participated in the committee on the opposition members' side. Of course, as the chair I appreciate all involvement, including those who participated as stakeholders in this bill. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-North for bringing this bill forward. I support, of course, the concurrence of this bill in the Chamber.

With that, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Savage
Allard	Lovely	Schmidt
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nally	Schulz
Copping	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Dang	Nielsen	Singh
Dreesen	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Fir	Pancholi	Toews
Horner	Panda	Toor
Irwin	Phillips	van Dijken
Issik	Renaud	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 30	Against – 0

[Motion for concurrence carried]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 205 Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act.

I would like to thank all my colleagues who have expressed their support of this bill. It is amazing to know that they have some personal connection to these atrocities of the past. I am sure that the sharing of their past experiences can be frightening as it will bring back the memories that they have wished had never happened to them and their loved ones. Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, Bill 205 seeks to provide confidence for them, too, by letting them know that the government acknowledges their grief and discomfort that was

brought by the intentional disregard to the universal right and freedom of any person to live peacefully.

Before going further, Madam Speaker, I just want to go back in time to discuss the term "genocide." Raphael Lemkin coined the word "genocide" to denote an old practice and its modern development, and from his words by genocide we mean the destruction of a nation, of an ethnic group. It was taken from the Greek word "genos," which means race or tribe, and the Latin word "cide," which refers to killing. Genocide was first introduced during the Nuremberg trials as he had helped in the preparation with the American team even though it was not included in the indictment against the accused Nazi leadership. It was not an illegal crime back then, and the verdict did not cover peacetime attacks against groups but only crimes committed in core incidents with a destructive goal.

Lemkin learned of the death of 49 members of his family, including his parents, while he was in Nuremberg. In his book of 1944 he stated, and I quote: generally genocide does not automatically mean the destruction of a nation except when performed by mass killing of all members of a group or ethnicity; it is intended, rather, to signify a co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundation of the life of targeted groups with the aim of crushing the groups themselves. End quote. Genocide is directed against a general group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity but just as being a member of that group.

As I previously mentioned, the government of Alberta has recognized the Jewish Holocaust and the Ukrainian Holodomor. Madam Speaker, allow me to provide some examples from the past to better provide a clear picture. History shows that horrendous terms were used by Nazi Germany to designate human beings that they believed were lesser. [Remarks in German] Life unworthy of life. These words were initially applied to the mentally ill and later on to the racially inferior and enemies of the state. This also led to a policy of mass killings, particularly targeting the Jews, and later on it produced a final solution, the complete extermination of Jews.

Numerous massacres were conducted and expanded to concentration camps, where prisoners were left to die in hunger and without respect to health care. It culminated in the building of extermination camps and facilities, whose main purpose was the execution, mass murder, and disposal of prisoners. Also, we have heard about the chambers and high-volume crematoriums, mass graves, and documentation of horrible medical experimentation. More than 10 million lives were lost in the terrifying incident, including 6 million Jews.

On the other hand the Ukrainian famine, also known as the Holodomor, happened in 1932-1933. The term Holodomor is a combination of a Ukrainian word for starvation and to inflict death. The depressing incident claimed the lives of about 3.9 million people, roughly 13 per cent of the population. It was brought by a dictator who wanted to replace Ukraine's small farms with state-run collectives and penalize independent-minded Ukrainians who stood threat to his totalitarian authority. According to the Holodomor research and education consortium, at the end of the 1920s the Soviet Union government decided to curtail Ukraine's cultural autonomy. Anyone who was seen and known as a threat to Soviet ideology and state-building aspiration could be arrested.

At the same time the leader, Joseph Stalin, ordered the collectivization of agriculture. The majority of Ukrainians, who were small-scale or subsistence farmers, resisted. The state confiscated the property of the independent farmers and forced them to work on government collective farms. The Communist Party set impossible quotas for the amount of grain Ukrainian villages were required to contribute to the Soviet state. When the villages were not able to meet the quotas, the authorities intensified the requisition campaign,

confiscating even the seeds set aside for planting and levelling fines in meat and potatoes for failure to fulfill the quotas. As a result, many thousands of farmers who had managed to leave their villages were apprehended and sent back, virtually a death sentence.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR, strongly denied that the Holodomor had occurred. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, secret police, and government archives that have become accessible to researchers support the conclusion that the famine was caused by Soviet state policies and was indeed intentionally intensified by Soviet authorities.

These two incidents may have happened multiple decades ago, but in recent years, Madam Speaker, a troubling occurrence happened in Myanmar. In August 2017 around 750,000 Rohingyas were forced to flee from their homes when Myanmar military forces carried out an offensive target against the militant group. However, this operation included the burning of villages and the attacks and killing of civilians. Also, Rohingya women and children were raped during this incident. Currently most of the Rohingyas are in refugee camps in Bangladesh, and it is believed that around 100,000 more are confined and persecuted in camps in Myanmar. The UN Secretary-General defined Rohingyas as the most persecuted minority in the world.

4:10

Just recently, Madam Speaker, the House of Commons unanimously voted that a genocide is currently being carried out by the People's Republic of China against Uighurs and other Turk Muslims.

Madam Speaker, we saw the terrible destruction of millions of lives aimed at certain targeted members of the population stemming from discrimination, hatred, and a total disregard to human rights. As I mentioned before, this bill does not go against the members or authorities of the jurisdictions where the acts of genocide have been experienced. It is focused to a direction that is analyzing the past and looking forward with an ultimate goal of preventing the happening of this untoward incident.

We all know that those who are the most vulnerable have to face a lot of challenges. There is a need to ease the burden they are carrying. This bill will as well promote a better understanding on the causes of genocide. Prevention needs an appropriate identification of different risk factors or root causes brought by this extreme violence. In order for us to deter the unlawful act, we need to timely determine and eliminate these underlining factors. By doing that, it will lead to the mitigation and, eventually, prevention of hatred or discrimination to any race, ethnicity, or religious congregation.

As I emphasized when I rose to ask for third reading of this bill, Madam Speaker, we need to spread awareness about genocide to the next generation as they will continue to do the same to the younger generations to come. That is why there is a need for the government to have a continuing plan and strategies to make sure that every Albertan is well aware and informed of all of the causes and effects of genocide. A holistic approach is needed to combat the formation or entertaining hatred or discrimination that will lead to a devastating disorder.

We may have safeguards or measures to penalize the acts of racism, hatred, and discrimination, but a better understanding of the causes and effects of genocide must be also put in the works so it will aid in discouragement and deterrence of the happening of genocide.

I want to thank all my colleagues for their overwhelming support of this bill and all the groups and societies who have been advocating for this to happen. With that, Madam Speaker, I move third reading of Bill 205. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate of Bill 205 in third reading? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is, as always, an absolute privilege to be able to rise and to speak in this Chamber. As has been my tradition the first time I speak in a week, I would like to acknowledge all of the front-line and essential workers that are doing incredible work and those health care workers and the folks that we very much applauded in the early days. I want them to all know that we still applaud them, and we still support them, and we will continue to fight for them. Thank you.

You know, I've had an opportunity to speak to this bill, actually, multiple times, and I felt it was only fitting that I have an opportunity to speak in third reading, because I feel like many of the concerns that myself and my colleagues have raised multiple times in regard to this bill have not been addressed, and we've not gotten any sort of clarity. In fact, our attempts to amend this bill to make it more acceptable have been denied, so I absolutely need to take this time to talk again about those concerns and get them on the record.

As I've said multiple times in this House, we absolutely stand with the sponsor of this bill and with the members opposite in acknowledging that we must condemn and we must recognize genocide. You know, I've said this multiple times in the House, that the former social studies teacher in me is always happy when we have an opportunity to talk about history and we have an opportunity to address the wrongs of history in the hopes, of course, that these wrongs never happen again. Sadly, though, one of the grave concerns that I've mentioned and my colleagues multiple times have mentioned in this House is the fact that this bill neglects to mention and to talk about the genocide of indigenous folks, neglects to name explicitly missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks and the trauma and the history of residential schools as well as other aspects like the '60s scoop.

What I want to focus on in particular is the crisis that is missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people, and that's an ongoing crisis. When we talk about history not repeating itself, sadly we've got history living itself out before our very eyes. I can tell you that I've had the opportunity for years, many years prior to being elected, to every year join the memorial march, which often happens on Valentine's Day, February 14, and to join Red Dress Day, which often happens in May and, in fact, is happening on May 5 of this year at Beaver Hills park if you'd like more information. Many times I've had an opportunity to walk and to stand with families and survivors and to listen to their stories, and I could tell you so many examples.

A close friend of mine now, named Dorothy, I met in I believe it was 2014 or 2015. I'd have to look; I think 2014. I met her because I was actually alone at this march, and I started talking to her, and she told me all about her niece Shelly, who disappeared in 2013. She shared the heartbreaking story of just no answers and her niece disappearing and having very little support in trying to find her. Shelly's story is the story of so many, and there are many stories that we will likely never hear. I can point to countless stories I've heard from my own neighbourhood, from the 118th Avenue-Alberta Avenue area of Edmonton, where, sadly, many women and girls have gone missing. This is very much an ongoing genocide. It's not just us telling you that, and it's not just those families telling us that. It's also the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit folks, which found that indeed this is a genocide.

I'm concerned that when, you know, asked about this, the sponsoring member was unable to talk about it. What he did talk about was how much of this bill – we asked him: “Who had been

consulted specifically? Which stakeholders did you speak with? Did you speak to families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?" We did not get an answer on that. Instead, he talked about the work that had been done in the House of Commons and how a lot of this was modelled after that work. The concern with that is plenty, but one of the biggest concerns is that that work on that private member's bill in the House came about in 2015. This was prior to the final report of the national inquiry, but it was also prior to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You know, there are multiple pieces that came after that and further evidence since then.

A lot has changed since 2015. It's now – what? – six years. A lot has changed since then, and rightly, you know, it should be incumbent upon the bill sponsor to have done that additional research and to have talked to families as well. I'm concerned that not only were folks not consulted on this piece of the bill, but also I'm concerned that this is another example of – how do I say this? I mean, I don't want to be disrespectful, but it's just another example of window dressing, of not adequately addressing an issue, not addressing an issue in a fulsome way.

I'll give you another example to support my concerns. I was able to sit in the government estimates for Indigenous Relations – well, for multiple, but two of the ministries in particular were Indigenous Relations and Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. In both those estimates – Indigenous Relations came first – I took the opportunity to ask the ministers what specifically they were doing to address the ongoing crisis that is missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks.

I asked the Minister of Indigenous Relations to talk about what funding specifically was allocated for that work, what concrete actions, other than striking a committee – trust me; I know some of those members quite well on that committee, and they are fantastic women. But what funding would be allocated to that work? Lookit, those 231 calls to justice: those are going to take funding, those are going to take concrete dollars if we are going to see action on this issue.

4:20

The minister said something along the lines of, "Oh, you know, when they need money for travel and that sort of thing, we provide it." "No, no, no. That's not what I'm asking about." So I didn't get an answer. Then a week later, in Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, I said that I'd had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Indigenous Relations about this very real and ongoing crisis that is missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks. "Are there funds allocated to addressing this work that you mentioned specifically in your business plan?" No answer from that minister. I asked her again later on in that evening because I thought: yeah, she didn't even acknowledge my question. Again, no answer.

So you can understand why on our side of the House we're quite concerned that this government is not taking the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks seriously. Again, it's not to doubt the work of the incredible activists that are trying their darndest to get that work done. But when we can't get specific answers from this government on what they are actually doing, that alarms us all. It absolutely does. I'd love it if those ministers are willing to tell me more about it today. I'd love for them to stand up and to share that, but to date I'm not seeing that.

You know, it's just so pertinent to me, not just because it's an issue that I am passionate about, but it's an issue that I see every day. In fact, I visited just on – what day was that? – Friday the acting executive director of iHuman. iHuman is an organization in my

riding that I'm so proud to be able to support. They work primarily with indigenous youth to take an arts-based approach. If you get a chance, at 96th Street and about 102nd Avenue, to go by iHuman, you can see they've got a beautiful mural on their wall that talks exactly about this issue, about how the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks crisis is a genocide. In fact, I pulled it up because I didn't actually happen to take a picture that day. They talk about the legal definition of genocide. Genocide is defined in article II of the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part," and it goes on.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 205 in third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise again to speak to Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. I want to start by saying thank you. I want to applaud my friend and colleague for Calgary-East for bringing this bill forward.

Madam Speaker, it's very crucial that we as a civilization recognize the atrocities that have affected the lives of so many people across the globe. Again, I welcome the subamendment brought forward by the Member for Peace River. By removing the list of genocides in this bill, our government is making it clear that in this province we recognize all genocides that are recognized by the House of Commons. When we brought this bill, I did have some concerns because somehow, in coming from different parts of the world, we might have different stories of genocide, especially if you have witnessed those genocides. It is very difficult to include all genocides. I think our government has done a wonderful job by removing the list of just selective genocides, and this is more – the scope of this bill is broad, and I am very happy to see this.

It became clear that by removing the list, it would create the most inclusive and impactful legislation, that would remain relevant for many years to come. There is no atrocity that is less significant in the eyes of those affected, and we should not venture to undermine that significance. I think it's true for many of us that sometimes we get so caught up in the present that we forget to remember the past and reflect on its significance for today.

With this bill, Albertans can use the month of April as an opportunity to review the past and educate themselves on the importance of confronting hatred. Even in seemingly insignificant forms, hatred of others based on immutable characteristics must not be tolerated regardless of the magnitude. That is why I'm happy to see this subamendment recognize the many genocides that have occurred throughout history.

I would like to take the remaining time I have to reflect on one genocide which I personally witnessed as a young kid and that is of particular importance for the constituents of Calgary-Falconridge, too. Madam Speaker, the tragic events transpired in New Delhi during 1984, a year, as I mentioned, that is remembered by so many constituents of Calgary-Falconridge. The year 1984 was the year of the Delhi anti-Sikh pogrom, that led to the deaths of thousands of Sikhs, youth, and women in various parts of India's capital city. These thoughtless killings occurred after the assassination of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The assassination was in retaliation after the conclusion of Operation Bluestar. The imposition of anti-Sikh violence was not restricted to just one city, Delhi. Within hours, within a few days it spread all across India as many Hindi-speaking heartland states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana experienced, and thousands of

people – it doesn't matter if you were related to them or not – got involved in this.

As I said, thousands and thousands of people have died. I have written that thousands of women got widowed – their husbands died – their kids died, women got gang-raped, and children became orphans. We remember not only the victims of 1984 but all those that were directly or indirectly affected by this heinous treatment of Sikhs in India.

As the great Nelson Mandela once said, "I say to all those leaders: do not look the other way. Do not hesitate . . . It is within your power to avoid a genocide of humanity."

Madam Speaker, this bill is important. We as leaders in this province must do everything possible to avoid the reoccurrence of such atrocities, which can only be done if we take time to understand how such tragedies occurred in the first place. This is an important step for our province in raising awareness on why hatred in all forms must be confronted. It must be confronted because, if left untouched, it can evolve into something horrible, which must be avoided.

I'm proud that our government is taking steps to learn from the past so we can be better now and in the future. As I said, it is crucial in life to learn from past mistakes so that you can be better in the future. That is the principle applicable to all parts of your life. This bill is a necessary step in not only improving both our individual and collective understanding of human history but also in honouring the lives and stories of those affected by genocide, both near and far.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 205 in third reading? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in third reading on Bill 205, the Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. This is actually my first opportunity to speak to Bill 205, so I'm pleased that I've had the opportunity to do so. This is a deeply important subject. We're hearing that comment, of course, from all members across the House today, and I think we're all agreed upon that. The impact and long-lasting effects of genocide are deeply felt by people across this world but also people right here in Alberta, and I think we are all united in our condemnation of genocide and do appreciate the importance of raising the issues of genocide and having time to recognize it and recognizing that importance. I do appreciate the bill that has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-East.

4:30

I took the opportunity to review some of the *Hansard* transcripts of debate on Bill 205 in the previous session as well, and it was quite remarkable to hear how every member from the House who rose to speak on all sides of the House had very direct, personal experiences that they shared, either through family connections or cultural connections, to groups who have historically and are currently experiencing genocide, as well shared their experiences having travelled. Of course, many of us represent constituents who are deeply affected by genocides that their cultural or religious group has experienced in the past.

I know we have in Alberta a very strong Jewish community, which has, of course, experienced the horrors of the Holocaust. The effects of that continue to reverberate and affect the Jewish community and all of us because it is something that we are all deeply horrified about. That's just one example. I know that Alberta has a very proud Ukrainian heritage. Many members of our Alberta

community are of Ukrainian heritage. I've had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with those from a Ukrainian background, both in my personal life and as an elected official as well, and to participate in some of the events. The atrocities of the Holodomor issue have also deeply affected Albertans.

Not only that; I've watched the transcripts and seen members speak about their travels abroad, and I know myself – personally, Madam Speaker, I've spent a fair bit of time working and volunteering in parts of Africa, particularly in South Africa, but I was deeply affected, mostly by the fact that we didn't hear about it for so long, by the genocide in Rwanda. I remember, young in my 20s, first reading, for example, the book *Shake Hands with the Devil* by Roméo Dallaire, which made a significant impact on me. I further did some more research and studying and realized how much that genocide went without marking at the time. The world was silent on what was happening even though hundreds of thousands of people died in such a short period of time. It was horrific, yet the world was not really aware. That made a deep impact on myself. I certainly was committed to international human rights issues. It sparked my interest in things that were happening in other countries, and it led me to my work in South Africa.

So I really enjoyed hearing and reflecting upon the comments from the members in this Assembly who've all deeply felt the issues of genocide, and I think it's a good thing that this bill is bringing forward recognizing that and making sure that we increase awareness of that.

However, I do have to say, Madam Speaker, as the members of the Official Opposition have expressed time and again, that we were deeply concerned when the bill was first brought forward as it seemed to enumerate a list of genocides, which by its nature excludes many atrocities experienced around the world but also here in Canada. While that portion of the bill has been amended and it's now just simply reflecting that there would be increased awareness around genocides that have been recognized by the House of Commons, as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood just talked about, that list is incomplete. Glaringly absent from that list of what atrocities have been recognized by the House of Commons is the historic and ongoing genocide of indigenous peoples in our country. I understand that it is an uncomfortable subject; of course, it is. We are all deeply uncomfortable wrestling with our history but also our present, but it is also so important to do so.

I want to share a personal story if I can, Madam Speaker. Just last night my eight-year-old son – we were having a discussion about: when did Canada become a country? When did the United States become a country? He wanted to know if Canada and the United States had ever gone to war, so we got into a little bit of background on the War of 1812 but also, you know, why Canada came about and how it came about and the United States and our history of British colonialism and French colonialism as well. We talked about that, and we talked about the years that Canada became a country. Then when we concluded this sort of history lesson, we made a point of saying, "But you know what's missing from this conversation?" My son said, "What?" I said, "Well, who are the peoples of Canada we have not talked about so far in this conversation?" He said, "The First Nations people." I said, "Exactly right." When we talk about the history of our country, we can't omit the history of the indigenous peoples of this nation. In fact, we have to talk about it because it is ongoing.

Again, as I mentioned, it was an uncomfortable conversation, but I had that conversation with my eight-year-old. We've had it before, and he's already learning incredible things. They celebrate Orange Shirt Day – right? – in school, and we've talked about what it's about, and we've talked about residential schools. Now, we didn't

use the word “genocide” in my conversation with my son. He doesn’t quite understand that concept yet, but he does understand the concept, as a child, of being taken away from their parents. That is something that deeply terrifies him, the idea that that could happen. To hear that it did happen was something that he needs to know. Now, we talked about the fact that people have learned and that we have learned a lot and that we don’t hold people responsible for that which their ancestors did.

But we also can’t pretend that it didn’t happen, because it does continue to affect us. This is not about apologies only. This is not about saying that, you know, those of us who live here – and my family didn’t immigrate to Canada until the 1960s, but we all hold accountability, for the reasons that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talked about, for making sure that we don’t repeat the mistakes of the past. We cannot ignore that when we’re talking about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, it is an ongoing genocide. It is absolutely an ongoing genocide.

When I look at Bill 205, I think the intent is good. I am concerned about limiting the genocides to those which have been recognized by the House of Commons because that is not a complete list. In fact, we’ve heard many members – and I thank the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, who just described, you know, his own personal experience with the Sikh community and the atrocities that they’ve experienced, and there are many examples. That’s not recognized by the House of Commons as a genocide, but we certainly still need to talk about those issues. So I still maintain my concern that we are limited to that.

However, I take comfort in the fact that Bill 205 actually does not describe or define genocide. Now, we know that the sponsor of the bill mentioned in committee that he was relying upon the UN definition of genocide, but it’s not actually defined in the bill. So in my mind, because I think this act is going to stay on the books for some time and there will be future governments that will be interpreting how we celebrate and resource it and really put the work into raising awareness around genocide, it won’t be limited, really, to that strict definition although I would argue, as we have and many people in this country have – and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did it, and the national inquiry did it – that those experiences are genocide, whether under the UN definition or cultural genocide. Regardless, this bill should recognize those.

I take some comfort, Madam Speaker, in supporting this bill with the idea that it is not going to be limited to just what’s recognized by the House of Commons, that it is going to take a broader definition and to make sure that we all take responsibility for genocides that have happened here in Canada and are ongoing. For that reason, you know, while I am cautious, I do know the effective law that lasts long beyond a particular government. This law will be in place if it’s proclaimed, which I hope it will be. It will be interpreted and applied by generations, going forward, of governments who will look at it and not just look at strict definitions but will look at the heart and spirit and intent of this, which is that we all must commit to raising awareness but also, most importantly, to acknowledging and refusing to repeat the mistakes of the past.

When it comes to genocide, those are hard conversations, but we need to have them. We need to have them in this province, and we need to have them in this country. I know my children are going to learn about it, and I know many children are, and it’s deeply important that they know their own history so that we can avoid repeating it in the future.

While I wish that there had been a clearer intention – and I know that sometimes when legislation is interpreted, you know, people will go back to the *Hansard* debates and people will go back to committee debates, to the sponsor of the bill, to just determine

exactly what the intention was. I hope that we’re not limited solely by what we’ve heard in the committee and from the sponsor of this bill. I hope that when it’s interpreted in the future, it is taken broadly and that it is taken with a full commitment to make sure that we all commit as a province to further awareness around genocide.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 205 in third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

4:40

Ms Fir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we all know, there are, unfortunately, some terrible things that take place in this world, whether they be past or present. Oftentimes it can be tough to keep up with all the negative news that at times it feels like we are being constantly bombarded with. It is certainly important news and things we need to hear but can sometimes be blocked out as we all at times are in need of more positive, hopeful stories. This can result in changing a TV channel or flipping past a section in the daily newspaper, choosing to pretend, at least for a short time, that these horrible stories do not exist in our world.

Still, it is impossible to block everything out, especially life-changing events. For example, I am sure everyone in this room can tell you exactly where they were when they heard of the horrible events that took place on 9/11 or the tragic story that was the Sandy Hook shooting. These sad yet historic moments are ones that were and will always be impossible to forget. However, as I mentioned previously, there are often so many negative stories out there that we tend to block some out or simply just cannot take them all in. There are even some that we know exist but may be somewhat ignorant of, thinking we know and understand them but truly do not. I’m sure many MLAs and ministers in this room, myself included, are guilty of this in some shape or form.

One example could be the Holodomor, which killed millions of Ukrainians from 1932 to 1933. The Holodomor, which translates to “death by hunger” in Ukrainian, took place when Joseph Stalin and his Soviet Union regime murdered between 3 million and 12 million Ukrainians that resisted forced collectivization. While the murders took place between 1932 and 1933, this was truly a well-thought-out and evil plan which began in the late 1920s, when Stalin had launched a campaign of intimidation and collectivization against Ukrainians who wanted Ukrainian independence and did not want to be associated with Stalin’s Soviet state.

This genocide began with Stalin ordering the collectivization of agriculture on Ukrainian farmers who resisted giving up their land. As a result of this, Soviet officials began confiscating property of independent farmers while forcing them to work on collectivized farms. They then branded more prosperous farmers as well as those that resisted as kulaks, rich peasants, which were enemies of the state. Stalin used this as a way to expel Ukrainians. The Soviets demanded impossibly high quotas for the amount of grain across Ukrainian farms, ones they knew could not be met. When the villages were then unable to meet the quotas, Soviet authorities would further increase the quotas while also confiscating extra grain and food from the farmers.

While this seems terrible enough, it was unfortunately only the tip of the iceberg. Soviet officials during this time were sent into the homes of Ukrainians, taking food and seizing possessions of the kulaks. This forced Ukrainians to starve in their villages while also being placed under extreme working conditions by Soviet officials, who were always on watch. If these officials caught farmers with food, they had orders to execute them immediately.

As sick and twisted as this was, the USSR had a thought process to it. They believed that collectivization of farms would produce mass amounts of harvest to feed Europe and contribute to the Soviet

economy. This made Ukraine, which at the time was known as the breadbasket of Europe, under siege for their most valuable resource while also being forced to stay silent regarding the crimes committed against many innocent individuals. At the height of the Holodomor, in June of 1933, there were roughly 28,000 men, women, and children dying of starvation each and every day. During this time Stalin also tried to eliminate all Ukrainian culture by prohibiting Ukrainian religion, cultural practices, and even language from being used.

While Russia still claims Holodomor did not happen, we all recognize the terrible events that took place during this time. In fact, Alberta was one of the first places to recognize the Holodomor when former MLA and Speaker of the House Gene Zwozdesky introduced Bill 37, Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, on October 30, 2008. Albertans now recognize the fourth Saturday of November as Holodomor memorial day.

There continues to be growing recognition for Holodomor. One example of this is the University of Alberta's Kule centre for Ukrainian and Canadian folklore as they continue to research and advocate for the victims of the Holodomor and act as a centre for the study of Ukrainian culture outside of Ukraine. Alberta is home to a vibrant and prosperous Ukrainian community, with the first settlers settling here in 1891. Many survivors of Holodomor have immigrated to Canada and Alberta, including Leo Korownyk, who was born in 1930 in Ukraine and survived Holodomor.

Madam Speaker, we would pray that something this evil would only take place the one time, but as we all know, this is not the case. There are other horrible genocides that have taken place in this world, including what is likely the most notorious, the Holocaust. The Holocaust is one that children today learn about at a very early age in school. However, as mentioned, many can at times be somewhat ignorant of the exact events that took place at this time. Of course, we all know that the Holocaust was truly evil, but it is at times hard to wrap your head around all the horrible events that took place during this time.

The Holocaust is recognized as the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of Jews by the Nazi party. It is estimated that roughly 6 million Jewish people were murdered by the Nazis, with their goal being to form a racially pure state which did not include the Jewish community as well as other groups, including but not limited to homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies, Germans with disabilities, and Slavic people.

During the Holocaust there were many different types of camps set up across Europe where the Nazi regime imprisoned Jews and other individuals. One in particular was concentration camps, which detained civilians seen as enemies of the Reich. Those were the first Nazi concentration camps to be established. Another was forced labour camps, in which prisoners were exploited for their labour for economic gain as well as to meet labour shortages.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the list does not end there. There were also transit camps, which were holding facilities for Jews waiting to be deported to a killing centre. Examples of these camps were Westerbork, located in the Netherlands, and Drancy, which was in France. Another was the prisoner of war camps, where Allied prisoners of war were sent, including both Poles and Soviet soldiers. Last but not least were the killing centres. There were approximately five killing centres, which all had the sole purpose to systematically murder large numbers of individuals upon arrival to the camp. At these camps both Jews and prisoners of war were murdered in gas chambers, where at the height of the Holocaust, between 1943 and 1944, an average of 6,000 Jews were killed daily. Auschwitz, a camp familiar to all, killed over 1 million victims of Nazi extremism. Overall, these gas chambers were responsible for

killing over 2.7 million Jews, or 46 per cent of Jewish victims, during the Holocaust.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that since these terrible tragedies took place, Canada has welcomed Jewish refugees with open arms. In fact, our great country became the home of over 35,000 Jewish refugees following the Holocaust. One survivor was Eva Brewster, who at 21 years old was transported by cattle car to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, where both her husband and daughter died. Twenty-five years after World War II Eva immigrated to southern Alberta, where she stayed until her passing in 2004. She was a writer, publishing *Vanished in Darkness: An Auschwitz Memoir* and the revised version, entitled *Progeny of Light/Vanished in Darkness*. She also served as deputy mayor of Coutts from 1986 to 1995.

Madam Speaker, despite the events of the Holocaust having taken place in the early to mid-1940s, there are still over 10,000 survivors living across Canada. In 2015 there were 17,300 Jewish Holocaust survivors living in Canada, which accounted for 28.2 per cent of Canada's Jewish senior population of 66 and over.

Madam Speaker, these are very brief reviews of only two genocides. There is so much more to talk about on these, and it is extremely important that we both recognize and remember them at all times in order to ensure this type of evil never repeats itself. Thanks to the member for bringing this bill forward and allowing us all to remember and have these conversations.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 205 in third reading? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

4:50

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak in third reading to Bill 205, Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month Act. I don't have much time, so I'm just going to touch on a couple of things. I was actually really pleased to hear the member who spoke before me, you know, talking about the Holocaust and such an enormous tragedy but actually making note of all of the people who died and were impacted by the tragedy.

One of the things that I wanted to touch on, because I did not see a lot of it in debate, is that people with disabilities were systematically, well, first sterilized, Madam Speaker: segregated, sterilized, and then murdered. That went on between 1939 and the early '40s, obviously, and I think they practised a lot of their murder techniques with this particular group. The reason that I bring it up – and, you know, I think best estimates put it over, like, 250,000 people with disabilities that were murdered in that period, in that very short period. But why I wanted to bring it up is that, sadly, this genocide actually goes on and continues to this day. People with disabilities are systematically targeted all over the world, whether it is for sterilization or really horrific treatment and, in many cases, murder.

A few years ago, maybe 10 years ago, I actually had an opportunity to go and work in Tanzania. It was actually with an organization called the Brothers of Charity, and they had begun to actually care for children with disabilities who had been impacted by the difficulties first in Congo, then Burundi, and then, of course, in Rwanda. There were a collection of kids, and they had to create a safe place for them to live because they were systematically being sought out and murdered not just in their home countries but where they had gone or fled to for refuge, and they were also being targeted.

I'm just bringing this up because I think it's important that when we talk about – and there are, sadly, so many groups of people that are targeted. It's really important not to forget that disability really

does sort of extend over many different categories of people. I think it's important to remember that.

Knowing that I have very little time left, I would like to add to what my colleagues have said and the importance of really recognizing some really awful, dark, ugly history in our own country. We have consistently, since this bill was introduced, I think, brought up the fact that it is incomplete in that it's not really addressing what has happened in our own country and that it was indeed genocide and that we are not really taking a stand and talking about how important it is to recognize what has happened here at home so that it never happens again. Isn't that the central message from one of the most horrific periods in our history, the message of never again? Never again begins with truth and justice. I think that for us to take those steps, we have to recognize that this is part of our history. If we don't understand and endorse every single piece of it, understand what our role was, what our history is, then how do we change the future?

I would just like to add, you know, a couple of things. I want to quote Marion Buller. She was the chief commissioner for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. There was this really short quote that I read where I thought, after all of this reading and all of the submissions and all of the time, it sort of came down to this. She said that it was an inescapable conclusion that genocide was committed against Canada's indigenous peoples.

Madam Speaker, soon to be Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit that this government and the government member who brought forward this piece of legislation understand now what is missing and what could be done to make it better. Remembrance, condemnation, and prevention: isn't this the goal of this piece of legislation? We can't really prevent things until we fully identify what they are, how they may happen again, and what we need to do going forward.

[The Speaker in the chair]

At the end of this debate I am incredibly disappointed that we have not done every single thing in our power to make this piece of legislation more inclusive and that we have not taken this opportunity – because this is a good piece of legislation. I think we all agree in this place that we want to do everything we can to prevent anything like this, like the things listed, anything like it from ever happening again, but our collective failure in this place – well, I shouldn't say collective because it's not all members of this place that are willing to let this go without recognizing what's missing – to do better when we know what we need to do to make it better, I believe, is a failure, Mr. Speaker.

While I am happy to support this legislation, I am incredibly disappointed that the members have chosen to ignore, I think, the very thoughtful comments of some of my colleagues, talking about the importance of truly including history that is very, very close to home and, unfortunately, that I think all of us need to address before we can make this any better and before real, true reconciliation can happen. I think, sadly, that we continue to see almost every week now where we have issues. We have problems. There is a lot of racism and hate. I'm not saying that racism and hate ultimately will lead to genocide, but isn't that the root of it?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for St. Albert. However, the time allotted of 55 minutes has passed, and under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(iii), that provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of the private member's bill to close debate, I would now like to call upon the hon. Member for Calgary-East. He has up to five minutes to close debate.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to close debate on Bill 205 in third reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:57 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	Lovely	Savage
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Loyola	Schmidt
Copping	Nally	Schulz
Dang	Neudorf	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Nielsen	Singh
Fir	Nixon, Jason	Smith
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Toews
Irwin	Pancholi	Toor
Issik	Panda	van Dijken
Jones	Phillips	Yaseen
Kenney	Renaud	

Totals: For – 32 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 205 read a third time]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Alberta and the Canadian Federation

511. Member Loyola moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly affirm that it is unquestionably in Alberta's interest to remain part of the Canadian federation and unequivocally denounce calls for Alberta to become a state that is independent of a strong and united Canada.

[Debate adjourned November 2: Mr. Schow speaking]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would just like to note that there was an irregularity on the Order Paper that indicated that the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika had four minutes remaining in debate given that he moved a superseding motion. That is not, in fact, the case. He has no time left to debate.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 511 from the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I think, as previously mentioned by the Government House Leader several times today, Motion 511 is redundant as Government Motion 29 already addresses this subject. Government Motion 29 states:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) affirm its loyalty to a united Canadian federation, and
- (b) urge the government to obtain a fair deal for Alberta within the Canadian federation.

Given that Government Motion 29 already addresses this issue, I move pursuant to Standing Order 8(4) that Motion Other than Government Motion 511 be moved to the bottom of the Order Paper under Motions Other than Government Motions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I see the Member for Edmonton-South is rising. He's rising on an issue that isn't debatable. I'm not sure what he would be rising for.

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

The Speaker: A point of order is heard.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is simply ridiculous. It's a ridiculous attempt to avoid this debate and avoid having the debate out in public. In fact, I think, clearly, Government Motion 29, which was on the Order Paper in July . . .

The Speaker: Sorry. I hesitate to interrupt the member. However, disagreeing with a process of the Assembly is not generally a point of order. If you can point me to a standing order or some reference that would show that this is out of order, I'm happy to hear it, but if you're just frustrated with the standing orders, I encourage you to take that up with committee.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Under 13(2), Mr. Speaker, then. Certainly, to explain, it was my understanding that this motion, which moves a motion to the bottom of an Order Paper, can only be used once on a motion. Certainly, the justification that this is substantively similar to Government Motion 29 is not the case. Otherwise, Government Motion 29 would not have been permitted to be put on the Order Paper originally, which, obviously, it was. So under 13(2).

The Speaker: Standing Order 13(2) is that I would provide clarification on a decision of the Speaker. The Speaker hasn't provided a ruling because the standing orders have provided the pathway for the hon. member to move this particular motion. I would just say that the motion is on a different question on a different day, which allows it to be moved twice in the same session. It's a different day, a different question, on a different Order Paper, all things that the Assembly hasn't previously decided upon. This isn't a point of order.

I will put the motion as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-West. It is a nondebatable motion. I encourage the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader to take this up at the standing order committee should he not like the standing order.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:19 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Jones	Panda
Allard	Kenney	Schulz
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Sigurdson, R.J.
Copping	Nally	Smith
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Toews
Ellis	Nicolaides	Toor
Fir	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Horner	Nixon, Jeremy	Yaseen
Issik		

Against the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Renaud
Irwin	Pancholi	Schmidt
Loyola	Phillips	

Totals:	For – 25	Against – 8
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[Motion carried]

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would move pursuant to Standing Order 8(1.2) that notwithstanding suborder (1.1) and (5) on a Monday afternoon following the conclusion of business for consideration of the Assembly under suborder (1), the Assembly now consider the Motion Other than a Government Motion that is next in precedence on the Order Paper as the sponsor of that Motion Other than a Government Motion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a nondebatable motion.

[Motion carried]

Denouncing Racism

517. Mr. Dang moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to denounce the display and use of all symbols and insignia associated with racism and hate speech in all public spaces and further denounce all demonstrations, marches, and rallies meant to terrorize and promote racism, including recent rallies held in Alberta during which some attendees carried symbols associated with racism such as tiki torches.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must do more to fight racism. We must take action as leaders in Alberta. We've seen terrible incidents as recently as just this weekend, including a woman in Calgary who was beaten and had her hijab torn from her face. Before we begin, I want to extend my sympathies to the victim and her family. But those aren't the only cases we've seen. We've seen six similar incidents in Edmonton in recent months: hate-motivated attacks happening in broad daylight.

Mr. Speaker, these brazen attacks are spurred by the general acceptance of hate symbols and demonstrations. We've seen these hateful symbols used at demonstrations that are operating under the guise of protesting COVID-19 restrictions but really are being used to terrorize and threaten racialized people. They are being used to instill fear in people's communities. Just recently we saw some of these rallies advertise using imagery from the Charlottesville marches in 2017. They used specifically the images of the torches that were carried by white supremacists in their advertisements. This is no mistake. This is intentional. This is designed to instill fear, to threaten, to intimidate, and to make racialized people feel unwelcome. We know that torch marches have long been synonymous with the KKK. We know that these torch marches have nothing to do with COVID-19, but they have everything to do with spreading hate, they have everything to do with spreading fear, and they have everything to do with making people feel unsafe in their own communities.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't about garden accessories. This isn't about what you have in your backyard. It's not about mosquitos. What it is about is making sure that people can walk through their neighbourhood without having to see a Confederate flag flying over their cemeteries, without having to see a Confederate flag flying over their homes. What we have to accept is that these hateful imageries, these hateful symbols are present in Alberta. They are being used in Alberta. They are being used at antimask and anti COVID-19 rallies as an excuse to instill that fear, to denigrate racialized people, to make them feel lesser.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, when we go and we bring forward this motion, when I present this motion and all my colleagues are here to debate it as well, we know that the incidents we talk about today are only the ones we hear about, are only the ones that we've seen in the media, that we've seen on social media or in the news, and we know that many, many more of these incidents go unchecked. We know that many, many more racialized people don't have the privilege and don't have the opportunity to share their story, don't have the opportunity to tell others that they are scared, that these images are causing fear. This is something that is happening not just here in Alberta but is happening across all of North America, across all of the world. We saw last week six Asians killed in Atlanta through what we believe to be a racially motivated attack.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about banning racist symbols, when we talk about banning racist symbols that promote fear, we're talking about ensuring that people don't worry about what they can or cannot do in their own neighbourhood, that racialized people don't have to be scared of who is going to be driving through their neighbourhood, that racialized people don't have to be scared of what is happening down the street or in the marches in their communities. We're seeking commitments from this government. This motion, of course, we know is not binding, but we're seeking commitments from this government to develop legislation that would outlaw these symbols, that would ban these symbols. We know that other jurisdictions are doing it. We know that in British Columbia they are currently working on legislation to this effect.

When we see the record of this government, we know that they are not doing enough. We have ministers across the way who neglect to make statements after these incidents happen. We have the Minister of Justice indeed make a weaker statement than that of Calgary Police Service after one of these hateful incidents just this weekend, Mr. Speaker. We have a minister of multiculturalism who instead of commenting on racism happening in front of her decides to refer to a statement six months old. When we talk about racism and racial imagery in this place, when we talk about racist and hateful symbols, we're talking about real people who are being affected now, not six months ago.

Racialized people live every single day in fear of these symbols. They live in fear that these symbols are something that could mean they or their families would see harm. It's not enough that this government stands by and says: we made a statement six months ago. It's not enough that this government stands by and tries to equivocate the matter and says: well, it's a matter of your freedoms. No, Mr. Speaker. What we have to denounce today are these hateful symbols unilaterally. We have to together say that it is not okay to fly a Confederate flag, to replace a Canadian flag with a hateful symbol. We have to say that it is not okay to carry torches through the streets and march on racialized people. That is what is not allowed, should not be allowed in this place.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply not true that this government has done anything on this racism issue. When we look at the record, we know that we need more action. That's why we're reiterating the call, and that's why we're joining the call with the National Council of Canadian Muslims, who after multiple attacks – as I said earlier, there were six attacks on racialized people in Edmonton. We asked this Premier to create a bipartisan committee to develop antiracism legislation and policies. A response has not been provided. In fact, the Premier has continued to ignore this request time and time again.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is the record of this government? The record of this government is that this weekend a Justice minister says that people marching with racist symbols like torches in

Calgary is simply a matter of freedom. We have a multiculturalism minister who says: well, racism, I made a statement about that six months ago. Then we have a Premier who ignores the call for a bipartisan committee to develop antiracist legislation and policies. That is the record of this government.

I call on every single member of this place, I call on every single elected official in this place, every single MLA, to stand up against this, to vote in favour of this motion, to tell the government that we have a duty to our constituents, we have a duty to racialized Albertans, we have a duty to all of our neighbours to tell them that we stand against hate, we stand against racism, and we stand against hateful imagery. It's that simple, Mr. Speaker. It's that simple because we know that Asian Canadians, Asian Albertans, and other racialized people are living in fear every single day that we allow this to continue.

I myself, Mr. Speaker, have received communications from many, many racialized people over the last few days who have spoken in support of this motion, but one of them stuck out to me. It was a young racialized woman – and I won't identify her for many reasons – and she reaches out and says that after the shooting in Atlanta she was very concerned about the safety of her neighbours and her friends, and it was very concerning that we didn't have a program that would actually ensure their safety. She asked me: is there any way we can develop a Safewalk-type program, something that they do on university campuses quite often? If you need a walk to the bus station or the LRT stop, we often have somebody walk with you. She asked me: can we develop a Safewalk program for racialized people, for Asians who are scared to go to the bus stop from their house?

Mr. Speaker, these are the stories, these are the messages that I'm receiving right now because we know that these racist symbols, this hate imagery, that this government hasn't done enough to condemn, that this Justice minister has actually, basically said was a freedom issue, are causing real fear in our communities. It is causing our racialized communities to be scared. That is no joke. That is no laughing matter. It is extraordinarily disappointing to me that the members in this place, when I asked about this motion earlier today in question period, laughed. Conservative members of the government caucus laughed about the seriousness of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I implore every single MLA again, I implore everyone to stand up against this government, stand up against this Premier, stand up against this Justice minister, stand up against this minister of culture and multiculturalism and say: that is not enough. It is not enough to point to a statement made six months ago. It is not enough to equate it to freedoms. What we must do is stand against racism, stand against racial symbols, and stand against hate imagery.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say that the motion is worded – we're very happy to support the motion, at least I am. I wanted to say that the entire situation that has happened this weekend was just disgusting. To imagine that two women walking in Prince's Island and that one could get pushed down, have a piece of her clothing ripped off her, her hijab, and then be punched in the face and kicked in the stomach: like, I think everybody in here is pretty gutted, not by only that situation. I've heard the Minister of Justice speak many, many times about how the women here in Edmonton could have been his daughter, could have been his wife. I've seen his reaction and the power in his statement, coming from where he came from and who he is and the type of Justice minister that not only this province deserves but

Canada, and how proud I am to work alongside this wonderful human being.

My father came to this country from India in 1963, and he was embraced in Edmonton by a woman named Pansy Strange and her husband, George. They didn't have children of their own, so they picked up my dad and a couple of other Southeast Asian young men that were coming here to study engineering and all sorts of different things and embraced them and put their arms around them and brought them into Canadian culture. Then when my dad married my mom, who is Irish, English, Scottish, Scandinavian, my mom dove into Southeast Asian culture. It was my dad who taught me about Canada and my love for this country and my love for this province and my mom who gave me everything that I needed to know and my love for Southeast Asian culture, including food, how to put on a sari, and many other things that are really important to how I personally define myself and in my culture.

You know, the importance of nonpartisan work in antiracism has never been more important, the work that needs to be done in this place. I look around me at all of the people and skin colours and religions and backgrounds, and it makes me so proud not only to stand here with my colleagues on my side but with the opposition members as well, because, quite frankly, it's going to take every single one of us to make this happen. We have a collective responsibility.

5:50

You know, when you cast aspersions and throw finger pointing and all of that, it might make you feel good for a second, but the truth is that the birthplace of racism comes from division and anger and misunderstandings and lack of education. This is about reaching deeper and thinking harder about what our responsibilities are, condemning hatred but not just on the side of racism, condemning all forms of hatred. It may stem in some places from racism, but it stems from all over the place, and if you allow that condemnation to only seek out what you believe in versus the things that are hard for you, that is when we find ourselves in places where we cannot help the people who most need it.

These women that have been attacked in our province will suffer with what has happened to them for the rest of their lives, and it's up to all of us to put our arms around them and embrace them, to help them understand that they're part of the fabric that built this province and how important they are.

I just wanted to – you know, we've done a ton of outreach and engagement with communities. One of the hugest privileges of being the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women is the deep and loving engagement that goes into the communities. I lost track of how many town halls we've done since COVID kicked in. You know, COVID has been horrible in so many respects, but the amount of engagement that we've actually been able to do with the community has been outstanding. Our government puts out information in eight different languages, sometimes 12, depending. The work that has been done with the communities to help understand their needs at this time, especially harder hit communities, has been overwhelming and touching, to say the least.

But what I think has most impressed me is that I've been able to speak to a lot of the families who've been impacted by this. We reached out to the school boards for James Lasu – you might have known who he is – a little boy from Airdrie that was bullied, and then to these young women from the Islamic school and their school boards and trustees, reaching out and talking. What it has done is stimulated a really important conversation that can never go away.

I always say this: I hate the word “tolerate.” I don't want to be tolerated. Does anybody in here just want to be tolerated? It's just such a lame word, and it keeps getting used over and over again. I'm really hoping that we move beyond the word “tolerance” because that's not good enough for me. I don't think it's good enough for anybody in this House. It moves into a space of truly understanding the unique perspectives not only of culture but also of being able to speak to those people with a cultural sensitivity and understanding of where they come from.

The member had mentioned that we haven't done anything. Well, I'm going to correct you, sir. I'm going to start with the Minister of Justice, the very first black Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. It's such a privilege to work with you. Let's start with carding, and I'm sure, Minister, you'll be speaking to this after. He had the guts to do something in this province that has never been done before across Canada, actually, to look into what is one of the most racist things happening on the streets to people of indigenous background or colour. He had the guts to do that, not years later, within months, and Bill 38, looking into the Police Act and also making sure that indigenous communities may have the ability to have their own police forces, because we know how important justice is and how it's viewed differently.

And I must say that the work that's been done in my ministry: all of these people over here have had a say and participated in town halls, reaching out to their communities, bringing issues from not only what is going on on the ground but our beautiful, multicultural cultural communities and indigenous communities, every single one of the people, and the ones who aren't here have had a say, whether it was in the cultural open houses that we've had either in person or online, which have been amazing and beautiful and highlighted and elevated culture in our province. They've all had a say in making sure that there's a lens on every single piece of policy that comes out from this government to make sure that we are on the cusp of understanding how it is that we invite people into our province.

You've heard the Premier say it so many times, how much he wants to steal the brainpower from other countries to come here to Alberta to get us back on track. We are going to need to have people come to Alberta, and if we don't stand up collectively together, opposition and government together, we will fail – we will – because it comes down to rhetoric, and it comes down to finger pointing and moves away from policy. Good policy takes some time to put together, especially when you're dealing with the number of amazing cultural groups that we have in this province. It takes a lot of consultation and time and energy and good discussions and understanding how you get there.

I also wanted to talk about the Minister of Labour and Immigration. Recognizing newcomers' talents, job-creation recognition, positive workplace culture, not being trapped in survival jobs when they come here, and having recognition through the regulatory bodies of Canada, harmonizing this process: these are all pieces of legislation that our minister has already worked on to make sure that new Canadians will have their professional designations recognized when they come to this province. That is actual work.

To the member, those are real points, real action. It's not just about talk. This is about real action, and it's time for us all to stand up together collectively.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. There are approximately four ...

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, I was first.

The Speaker: I appreciate the input from the hon. Minister of Justice. Traditionally speaking, we go back and forth during this sort of debate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start here, on Treaty 6 territory, thanking my colleague for introducing this motion. It's so important, and as we've seen, it's more timely than ever. You know, there's so much I want to say, and I realize that my time is short. We're calling for tangible action. We're calling for justice. We're calling for the voices of the multiple Muslim women who've been attacked in our province to be heard.

I can't imagine the absolute terror and pain that our Muslim sisters are feeling right now. I shared the news from yesterday of the woman being attacked horrifically in Calgary, and one person commented, a Muslim woman in our community: "Yesterday I was wearing black dress and black hijab, my husband told me not to go for walk [because] he fears someone will attack me! So now we have to live in fear that someone will attack us... [for] the way we dress!" Imagine what it feels like to walk and to not feel safe in your own community. When we call on this government to take action, we're calling on them to take these words seriously.

Before my time runs out, I want to share the words of a good friend and an incredible woman in our community, Dr. Muna Saleh, who says:

I don't think many people truly understand the sense of collective trauma we experience with every racist attack. With every racist rally. It's too much.

Yet some have the audacity to call anti-racism work "political" & "divisive." Our lives & safety are at stake.

I call on every member of this House to listen to those words.

We're not being divisive when we call out racism. That same minister who shared those words also condemned us for being angry. Of course, we're angry. Why wouldn't we be angry? We're angry. I'm a white person with a whole heck of a lot of privilege, but I'm so angry for my Muslim sisters, who don't feel safe in our province. You better believe that we will continue to be angry, we will continue to speak out, and we will continue to call for justice until our sisters are safe and respected and welcome throughout this province.

I call on every member of this House to support my colleague's motion and to follow up that motion with action.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) – it is 6 o'clock – the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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