



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 12, 2021

Day 95

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 62

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 12, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, I encourage you to remain standing.

Statement by the Speaker

HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh
June 10, 1921, to April 9, 2021

The Speaker: It is with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh at the age of 99 on April 9, 2021. He was two months shy of his 100th birthday. Our prayers are with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and their children as well as the extended Royal Family during this difficult time. Our thoughts are also with citizens of the United Kingdom and those of our fellow Commonwealth countries, whom His Royal Highness faithfully served as consort to Queen Elizabeth II since her ascension to the throne in 1952.

The Duke of Edinburgh spent his entire life in public service, which included a decorated career as a naval officer. He will be remembered for his leadership and patronage of more than 750 charitable organizations. Alberta first welcomed Prince Philip to Alberta in 1951 as he accompanied Princess Elizabeth during their inaugural tour of Canada. Many of you will have fond memories from their most recent visit in 2005, when Her Majesty and His Royal Highness participated in the centennial year celebration.

May we pay tribute to him in a moment of silent prayer. May he rest in peace. Grant eternal rest unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

Hon. members, the national anthem of Canada.

Recording:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
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: Please be seated.

Members' Statements

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

Impaired Driving

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the impact impaired driving has on our society. In Alberta on average 1 in 10 drivers involved in fatal collisions have been drinking before

an accident. Each year in Alberta 90 people are killed and over 1,000 are injured in collisions involving impaired drivers, and in Canada approximately 1,500 people are killed and more than 63,000 injured annually. In October 2016 a 17-year-old died and her 16 year-old-friend was seriously injured due to an accident involving a drunk driver.

Drunk driving is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. It puts the lives of your neighbours, friends, and children at risk. This government has no tolerance for impaired driving, which is why last summer we passed the Provincial Administrative Penalties Act, which imposes tougher penalties for impaired driving. If you are drinking or under the influence in any way, please call a friend, take a cab, or call a community-designated driving service to take you home. Just don't get behind the wheel. Every year on the news or through members of the community I hear about tragic accidents that break hearts. The human cost of impaired driving is real and is irreversible. MADD, which stands for Mothers Against Drunk Driving, is an excellent resource to visit and learn about the heart-wrenching stories from victims' families, statistics, tributes, awareness campaigns, youth services, and volunteer opportunities.

Individuals from across Alberta are forever impacted physically, emotionally, and mentally from accidents relating to impaired driving. As summer is on the horizon, I urge everyone to exercise caution and responsibility. There's too much at risk.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

Member Irwin: Irresponsible, reckless, idiotic, reprehensible: whatever the adjective, Albertans were stunned to see 17 UCP MLAs sign on to a letter calling for fewer restrictions and questioning the decisions of public health officials and their own Premier. Today I'd like to remind some of these MLAs of their own words as many of them seem to have forgotten their values and why they're here.

At the start of the pandemic the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat proclaimed that "love thy neighbour is more important now than ever." Does she no longer feel that way? A week or so ago the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock called for people to be diligent the next little while and to just hang in there, so I ask him: what changed? In January the Member for Banff-Kananaskis felt that there's lots to be optimistic about. Is she still optimistic, knowing that her dangerous actions will prolong this pandemic? In February the Member for Airdrie-East said that she wants businesses to do well and that she wants kids back playing sports. So do many of us. Does she truly think we'll get there by rejecting science? After her Hawaiian vacation the Member for Grande Prairie said that she was sorry that her actions were dismissive of Albertans' frustration and grief. Well, will she apologize again to all those grieving the loss of loved ones due to COVID?

Finally, not long ago another rural member called out his government for its hypocrisy, saying that it has clearly undermined its own authority. Well, let's talk about hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. Hypocrisy is every day claiming that we're in this together and then one day deciding that we're really not. Hypocrisy is asking Albertans to repeatedly make sacrifices so that we can get this virus under control but deciding to throw that all out the window when it gets a little tough. I said early on in this pandemic that I'd love if we could look back and say: we did too much, but – you know what? – we saved lives by doing it. These MLAs have done the opposite. They have done little, and they're fighting for their government to do even less. It's not too late to change. It'll take courage, it'll take heart, and it will take a brain that's willing to accept science and evidence.

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

Medical Students from Rural Communities

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last month I stood in the House and asked the Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education about increasing opportunities for students from rural communities to enter into med school. As the Minister of Health pointed out, the rural health workforce action plan has set aside spots for rural applicants at the University of Alberta's and University of Calgary's medical program. I provided input leading up to this announcement, and I believe this is a step in the right direction for rural students in the medical program, but we still have a lot of work to do to get more rural representation in our medical schools and in the medical field.

Mr. Speaker, according to enrolment data at the U of A there were 138 rural applicants for their medical school in 2020. Of those 138, 111 were deemed to have met all the academic requirements for their application, and of those 111 qualified applicants only 25 received an offer of admission. That's only 22.5 per cent of qualified rural students actually receiving an offer. At the U of C 127 applicants to the medical school were received. Of the 127, 119 were deemed to be qualified, and of those 119 qualified applicants only 11 received an offer of admission. Only 9.2 per cent of all rural applicants actually received an offer.

1:40

Statistics like these are extremely frustrating for rural communities, who constantly battle the effects of high turnover rates and vacancies for medical positions in rural Alberta. Many communities have to find a new family doctor every three years. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see that our government has made even more progress to help address this issue. On March 29 the Minister of Health announced a new \$6 million program to help pay for students' medical school costs. In exchange, students will complete residency training in rural Alberta and agree to practise in a rural Alberta community once graduated. Access to quality and timely health care is a fundamental right, and it should not be a challenge for rural and remote communities to obtain and keep a doctor, surgeon, or other medical professionals in their community. The solution is training rural grads that are more likely to commit to their rural communities.

Thank you.

Ramadan

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, through you to the thousands of Alberta Muslims and all those observing this special time in the Islamic calendar throughout the world, I extend my best wishes for this blessed month. Ramadan Mubarak.

The month of Ramadan is the most sacred month of the year for Muslims. For the entire month Muslims fast every day from dawn until sunset. They are able to find strength through their devotion to fulfill one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a time for deep contemplation of one's relationship with Allah, devout prayer, charity, and recitation of the Quran. It is at this time that we focus on the less fortunate and less privileged, the fast reminding us that it's like to go without food and to feel hunger, calling us to correct the ills associated with disparity and economic injustice. This month fosters a strong sense of community spirit, reflected in the way mosques and Muslim families in the constituency open up their homes to all faiths to share an iftar meal although the breaking of the fast this year, like the last, will be very different.

I encourage everyone – and I do mean all Albertans – to take time this Ramadan to learn more about Islam and share experiences with

one another. We are a community that is as strong as we are diverse. It is important that we learn what Islam is and what it is not, especially given the recent attacks on black Muslim women in our province. Ignorance continues to separate Albertans until we see each other as so different that we cannot coexist, but, as we know, there is much more that we have in common, which should serve to unite us all. May we come together as one community to celebrate Islam's universal message of peace. On behalf of all of my colleagues I wish you all a Ramadan full of reflection and growth. Ramadan Mubarak.

The Speaker: Ramadan Mubarak to you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Regional Approach to Policing

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to discuss something that I feel needs a little more attention. While we've all heard the cries to defund the police, we haven't been giving enough attention to genuinely reforming and improving the current policing system we already have, so I'd like to spend some time highlighting the benefits of regional policing. Obviously, this is something that I feel strongly about, and I have often spoken about this subject in the past. I have always supported genuine reform in the field. One example is my strong support and recognition for the advocacy of banning police carding, but there is more work that needs to be done in Alberta's police services to make them more efficient and as effective as possible.

Regional policing is a practice that ensures that it's giving large municipalities and smaller municipalities, including indigenous communities, that surround them the ability to respond to calls for service more effectively, thus improving the quality of service provided to the public. As we know, the RCMP resources have been stretched thin, so the regional approach would alleviate pressures on the system. More often than not criminals focus their activities in regions surrounding the population centres. Because of this, it makes more sense for a regional police service, which is equipped to target these areas, which means that the RCMP will not have to respond to criminal activities which are located just beyond the borders of the large municipalities. This will make the response times faster, improve trust for the public.

I have the utmost respect for police officers at every level: municipal, provincial, and federal. What regional policing can offer, however, is a more focused approach in areas that need that extra attention. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, Ottawa can't always know what is best for Alberta, and that's why I think that a regional approach is better suited for our communities.

Thank you, sir.

Premier's Leadership

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, real leaders are focused on the future. They're willing to do everything and anything to deliver the best for Albertans. What we see with this Premier is the opposite. We see a Premier who talks about needing to find balance – but balance is achieved between opposing forces, and all of the evidence indicates that places that control the virus also have better economic recoveries – a Premier who denies the risks and dangers of COVID-19, called it influenza, said that Alberta's homeless population has some sort of immunity to it, and questions whether many of those who caught COVID-19 were actually sick, a Premier who would threaten to drop an election into the third wave rather than show the COVID 18 the door or risk a leadership review.

Throughout this pandemic we have seen those at the front lines, from health care to grocery store workers, risk their mental and

physical health to save lives and protect our community from this deadly disease, and at this same time we see a Premier who is more focused on his political survival than the lives and livelihoods of Albertans time and again. Over 2,000 Albertans have died, thousands are sick, and hundreds are hospitalized. Vaccines are coming, and I hope we will get every Albertan vaccinated as quickly as possible, but this pandemic is not over. Lives are at risk, and businesses are struggling with the lack of support from this government.

Albertans have the right to expect their Premier to be one hundred per cent focused on them, on ensuring that they can get through this pandemic safely. Sadly, this Premier pays more attention to the internal political drama of his caucus and the tenuous grasp he has over the leadership of his party. Albertans deserve a Premier who's focused on them, a Premier who is willing to risk everything to ensure that Alberta comes through this pandemic stronger than ever, and this Premier can't deliver.

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

Financial Literacy Curriculum

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month, after a consultation and development process that started in August 2019, Alberta's government publicly released the new draft kindergarten to grade 6 curriculum. This was long overdue. After years of declining student academic performance in literacy and math, Alberta's new draft curriculum will renew the importance of teaching foundational knowledge across all subjects to better prepare students for success. This curriculum brings a new and practical approach to numeracy. Students will use tried-and-true methods to learn foundational math skills and understand numbers and objects in order to solve problems confidently.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm most excited about is the introduction of basic financial literacy like budget planning. For quite some time the previous curriculum did not require students to learn about money and financial concepts. While the NDP might have thought this was a good thing, considering that they seem to believe that money is infinite and that debt is not a problem, we know that basic economics tells us otherwise. Grade 6 students will be introduced to determining the value of money, practising financial transactions, and how mathematics applies to day-to-day life.

When students graduate, they enter a world where every step they take from graduation onwards will be directly impacted by their financial literacy. Everything from career decisions to something as simple as buying groceries revolves around finance. It's part of life. Having basic personal financial skills is so important as a contributing member of society. The purpose of education is to shape young minds and teach them to think critically with the expectation that one day they will grow up, begin a career, and contribute to society. How can one do so without basic financial literacy? The answer is simple: you can't. I'm thrilled that the new curriculum seeks to do just that, to teach basic financial literacy. It is our job to help provide the tools our future generations need to succeed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I beg your indulgence while I make a statement.

Statement by the Speaker

Impartiality of the Speaker

The Speaker: Members, in my first remarks to this Assembly upon being elected as your Speaker just shy of two years ago, I shared with you some guiding words of my grandmother that I have

reflected upon greatly over the past few days. Those words were these: "In our haste to do good, we must never forget to be good for our families, our communities . . . our province" and to each other. In haste, I engaged on a matter of political discourse that may have raised questions about the impartiality of the chair. Upon quiet reflection and given the benefit of time, I have regret for my error in judgment.

1:50

I have always believed in the fundamental sanctity of our democracy and its institutions, that are built to uphold it. It is my job to serve you in my role as Speaker and ensure that the privileges you enjoy as elected members are upheld and treated with that same sanctity of the institution. The principle of the impartiality of the chair is fundamental to a healthy, functioning democracy. I deeply regret my actions, that they may have jeopardized the importance and supremacy of this principle.

I serve the Legislature at the pleasure and in the confidence of its members. I do not take this responsibility lightly. I apologize to each and every one of you for crossing a line that the Speaker ought not cross. My goal as Speaker has always been to bring forward momentum, learning, and improving. I can assure my colleagues that I have taken significant learnings from this event, and I recommit to you to give you my best at every turn. I apologize unreservedly.

Oral Question Period

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

Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The third wave is here, and once again Alberta has the highest per capita case count in the country. More than 14,000 Albertans are sick, 376 have been hospitalized, and 90 are in the ICU, yet the public discourse around the need for these life-saving health restrictions is not about any of these Albertans; no, instead it's about 17 people, 17 people who thought only of themselves. To the Premier: will you publicly call on these MLAs to withdraw the letter that they wrote and take action to prevent any further efforts to sabotage Alberta's pandemic response?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may have misheard the Leader of the Opposition, but I thought I heard her say that 14,000 people are sick with COVID-19. It's very important that we not mislead Albertans about the nature of this disease. The significant majority of people who test positive do not suffer severe symptoms and do not end up in hospital. I would ask the member to please follow the science and stop making things up.

Mr. Dang: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: With respect to that letter, obviously, Mr. Speaker, I disagree with it, as does government policy. We are taking the necessary measures based on expert advice to protect both lives and livelihoods.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

Ms Notley: Not only did he make the call; he also decided to diminish the import of people getting infected. You know, the Premier defends these MLAs on the basis of free speech, but ironically he's the one who can't speak freely. Behind closed doors he's threatening elections, telling these 17 he won't sign their

nominations. He endorses them publicly but chastises them privately. Mr. Speaker, that says that his main concern isn't public health. It's his own political survival. Premier, say that it ain't so. Stand up to these MLAs today. Make them apologize for the confusion and risk they are creating. Withdraw it. What is the Premier waiting for?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's important that our critique of the pandemic challenge be factual. I don't diminish the importance of the active case count because we know, as I've stated repeatedly, that currently about 5 per cent of the total active case count is likely to end up with people in hospital. That is why we've taken extraordinary measures to limit social interaction and viral transmission, measures which have a very painful cost for many Albertans. The views and the statements attributed to me and my caucus are completely untrue. I don't know if the NDP – now they're inventing things that happened in another party's caucus. I invite her to take that back.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are focused on the fight against this virus, yet the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka is focused on, quote, the fight with health officials, who he says are obsessed with fear. These health officials are preventing illness, protecting our economy, saving lives. They rely on a majority of those members for their authority, yet this Premier can't even guarantee that, jeopardizing the fight against COVID in the process. These officials are doing their job. They need this Premier to get his MLAs out of their way. Why won't the Premier do that?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, democracy is not a menace. Elected representatives speaking their minds on important matters is a natural part of our parliamentary democracy, as is the responsibility of government to act and to do the right thing, just as Executive Council has done in accepting the advice of our chief medical officer in managing the challenge of this pandemic with extraordinary measures to limit viral transmission. We will continue to act, based on the evidence, to do the right thing.

Ms Notley: Executive Council gets their authority from the government caucus, yet this Premier is so weak that he can't get the caucus in line. So what does he do? He's talking about putting them in charge. Last week he said that a committee of his MLAs will determine the next step for lifting the latest restrictions. Mr. Speaker, that is potentially 16 foxes, one henhouse. Will the Premier commit that none of the 17 MLAs who care so little for the lives of Albertans will be making decisions about reopening?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yes.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is good news. On the flip side, if the Premier is acknowledging that those 17 MLAs cannot be trusted to participate in a committee that talks about reopening after the pandemic, why in heaven's name does he think Albertans should accept them in the government caucus now? Why are they still in this caucus? Why hasn't he disciplined them? Why aren't they on this side of the House?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, boy, the leader of the NDP loves throwing around words like "discipline" and "blame." I will point out a little bit of parliamentary democracy 101. In our Mother Parliament, in Britain, 75 to 90 members of the government caucus have consistently opposed the government's public health restrictions. I think those members have been mistaken. None of their sentiment has prevented Her Majesty's British government from taking responsible actions to limit viral transmission. This government will continue to do the right thing.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, they're not comparable; he knows it. Nonetheless, the Premier claims his MLAs are just representing their constituents, but they're not. In fact, the mayor of Canmore just sent a letter to the MLA for Banff-Kananaskis saying that the majority of his constituents and the council's constituents strongly support the measures recommended by the chief medical officer of health. Clearly, this MLA is not representing her constituents. She is not listening to the Premier. She is putting everything at risk and people's health at risk. Why is she still in the caucus?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what this line of questioning has to do with government business. If the member wants to talk about government business and government policy, here it is. Alberta has taken extraordinary measures to limit viral transmission, to avoid preventable deaths, and to protect our health care system while seeking – while seeking – to minimize the negative impact on our broader society of public health restrictions. We know what the NDP would do if they were in office right now. The schools would have been closed all year, all 10,000 places of worship would be padlocked, and there would be curfews and stay-at-home orders. Thank goodness, they're not there to make those decisions.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Instead, we have the highest number of cases per capita again, second wave and third wave. That's on you, Premier.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

Ms Notley: Now, if he wasn't so busy trying to survive the hunger games of his own caucus, he'd also be seeing that he's failing Alberta students. A running total of 13 different school boards have now refused to pilot the curriculum. They represent half the entire population, public and Catholic, urban and rural, north and south. This is not widespread support; it is an unprecedented rejection from a normally agreeable level of government. Premier, why are you forcing your broken curriculum on Alberta students?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the point. Nobody is forced to trial the curriculum. There are 15, 16 months ahead of us to receive constructive input and make revisions. This government was elected on a commitment to transparently develop a balanced curriculum that would undo the damage of failed fads like discovery math, which is why Dr. John Bowman at the U of A has said, "With its emphasis on understanding and visualization, the proposed Alberta K-6 curriculum provides a solid basis for numeracy and mathematical skill." That's what we need to make up for the last 20 years of failure in this area.

Ms Notley: Well, speaking of quotes, Mr. Speaker, Calgary Catholic, which is actually still on the fence – their superintendent calls the social studies curriculum, quote, horrific. Lethbridge board chair Christine Light says that it fails to address diversity while lacking coherence. Meanwhile ATA president Jason Schilling says that it's "fatally flawed," and their survey says that 91 per cent of teachers oppose it. [interjections] It's interesting. I say the word "teacher," and the Premier laughs. Who exactly is going to teach this curriculum if 91 per cent don't support it? You?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the proponents of the failed experiment with inquiry learning and discovery math always opposed these sensible curriculum reforms. We always knew that we would have to overcome that establishment opposition to get those basic skills for kids who are falling behind. It is unacceptable that the NDP saw

kids declining in global math proficiency, standardized tests, which means that they're less prepared to compete in the economy of the future. This curriculum will correct that.

Ms Notley: Well, I note once again that the Premier's reaction to all of this feedback has been to put in his earplugs. Meanwhile the Education minister issues ultimatums. She told boards that she won't listen to their advice to fix the curriculum if they don't pilot it, but the boards can't pilot the curriculum without someone listening about how to fix it. A real chicken-and-egg situation, Mr. Speaker. Let me help. The Premier should just take back his broken curriculum, actually listen to educators instead of laughing at them and diminishing them as they're on the front lines every day protecting our kids, and, instead, not force our kids to be a subject of his experiment.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Alberta schoolkids have been failing in the experiment of discovery math and inquiry learning. This government was elected on the explicit commitment to undo the damage, to return to tried, true, and tested teaching methods, the basic building blocks of knowledge and competency, which is why Professor Georgiou of the University of Alberta has said, "The new K-6 curriculum is inspired by the science of reading and brings to our teachers, parents, and children what is currently known around the world as best practice to support our children to become successful readers and writers."

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

Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

(continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, when 18 MLAs in positions of power in the government caucus speak out against public health orders, it puts our entire community at risk. Don't take it from me; take it from Albertans who joined myself and the Leader of the Official Opposition today for a press conference to call on these MLAs to retract their harmful letter, apologize, and pledge full compliance to the public health orders. To the Premier. My question is simple. If these MLAs won't listen to the demands from all of their constituents worried about the safety of their communities, should they really be MLAs, and should they really be sitting in your government caucus?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of a member of this place who has called on the public not to comply with the law, so why does the NDP keep inventing that? Why are they creating a problem, that they're then critiquing, when it doesn't exist? I've been clear with members of the government caucus that if any member of the government caucus purposely engages in civil disobedience or encourages others to do so, they would have to step outside the government caucus because the rule of law is fundamental.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, this is a problem created by this Premier.

Indeed, Kellie Verburg has lived in the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka for 11 years. She conceded this morning that the public health orders are difficult, and she looks forward to the day when they're gone. But Kellie has said that the people she talks to in Lacombe-Ponoka are willing to do their part to keep others safe. She added, about the 18 MLAs speaking out about the public health orders, that they, quote, have the audacity to state that they're representing their constituents, yet they seem only to represent those whose opinions match their own, a vocal minority spreading

dangerous misinformation. To the Premier: who is standing up for the people in Lacombe-Ponoka willing to follow the law and keep people safe?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government is standing up for all Albertans and seeking to keep them safe from this lethal virus, particularly these variants, which are spreading even more quickly. I would encourage all members of this Assembly and all Albertans to take it very seriously. I would encourage people, for example, the people in Athabasca county, which now has, I believe, 2,600 cases per 100,000, the highest level of active cases that we have seen since the pandemic began – I would ask all of their local leaders to take that very, very seriously.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier may wish to speak to his MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, then.

Reverend David Pollard from Medicine Hat also joined us this morning. He noted that throughout the pandemic the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat has undermined public health orders and the many constituents in his riding who comply with the rules. The reverend said: the Premier chooses to entertain my MLA and others in their campaign to lengthen this pandemic and make the work of our health professionals that much harder out of political expedience. Reverend Pollard is fed up. He wants the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to resign for his flagrant disregard or for the Premier to remove him from the government caucus. My question to the Premier: if the MLA won't, will you?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the distorted reasoning of the NDP is completely irrational. The NDP votes against all sorts of laws. They oppose them because they don't believe that they're the right policy approach. Should we therefore infer from that that in opposing a policy, they are encouraging people to violate the law? I remember having a bill in Ottawa to impose mandatory minimum sentences for trafficking in minors, for human trafficking. The NDP predictably voted against it. Does that mean that they are affirming child trafficking? Of course not.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie is next.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

(continued)

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past week, since the release of the new draft curriculum for kindergarten to grade 6 students, I've heard from a number of constituents in Grande Prairie about the material. I've heard praise for the addition of financial literacy and computer programming concepts. The social studies curriculum has received particular attention, however, so I'm actively collecting feedback from both parents and educators for the ministry's consideration. To the Minister of Education: can you outline for Albertans what their options are for providing feedback and how that feedback will be considered as the draft curriculum undergoes further refinement?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that great question. I'm glad to hear that the member is collecting feedback from parents and educators in Grande Prairie. We want to hear feedback from all Albertans across the board because this is a draft curriculum. The recently released K to 6 draft curriculum will have a yearlong feedback period, where all

Albertans can participate in a survey as well as future engagement sessions. The feedback we receive will be critical as we move towards piloting the draft curriculum this fall and future implementation. I encourage all Albertans to participate at www.alberta.ca/curriculum.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that social studies is fundamentally the study of people in relation to each other and to the world and given that our world is growing increasingly interconnected and interdependent and further given that many students and adults lack fundamental knowledge about history, economics, world religions, and belief systems, to the same minister: as social studies has been the source of the most feedback in my constituency, can you explain how the new social studies curriculum will equip students with the essential knowledge they need to thrive in and relate to the world around them?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member proposed, the new social studies curriculum is in fact moving to focus on people in relation to each other and the world. It will draw from history, geography, civics, and economics to ensure students have a rich and well-rounded knowledge about the events, people, development, and ideas that have shaped Alberta, Canada, and the world. By setting connections between people, places, and environments, students develop understanding and appreciation for different viewpoints and experiences. As I said, the curriculum is draft, and we welcome feedback from all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. Given the comprehensive nature of this draft and given that it has been released as a draft, people have been asking about the process for revision. Given that there have been claims, for example, that teachers have been shut out of the development process on the current draft curriculum, can the same minister briefly outline the process by which the draft was developed and the groups or stakeholders that were consulted as well as the next steps for revision and who will be included in that phase?

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify that teachers have absolutely not been shut out of the development process. In fact, more than a hundred Alberta teachers were brought together to review the draft K to 6 curriculum and provide feedback based on their expertise and experience in the classroom. Over the past year Alberta Education has consulted with a wide variety of education stakeholders, including subject matter experts, deans, teachers, indigenous elders, and postsecondary professors. Next steps will include a yearlong engagement on the draft curriculum. Feedback is absolutely critical. We want all Albertans to visit www.alberta.ca/curriculum.

Coal Development Policy Consultation

Mr. Schmidt: Albertans have reached out to our caucus to inquire about a temporary diversion licence granted to Benga Mining. Albertans are very concerned about coal exploration, especially when we're supposed to be in the middle of good-faith consultations about whether Albertans really want to tear up our natural areas to mine coal. Public notice was published on March 22; the licence was granted on April 1, giving Albertans less than 10 days to express their concern. How is it that this licence was granted in

much less than the 30 days that are usually granted for public review, and why did the government make it so hard for Albertans to express their concerns about this important issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's quite confusing. The NDP's position on coal is quite confusing and very hypocritical. Of course, they spent four years in government promoting coal. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. We now hear them say that there should be no mines in the eastern slopes, yet when they were in government, one was actually built in the eastern slopes. When they were in government. Two more are in the regulatory process, including the Grassy Mountain project, which they speak of. It was in the regulatory process for four years while they were in government.

2:10

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that our question was about why the Energy Regulator is fast-tracking these very controversial approvals and given that for almost a year now the government has assured Albertans that there was nothing to be worried about as they signed secret deals with Australian billionaires to tear down our mountains and mine coal and given that while the government launched a consultation after they got caught, that largely relies on a leading survey, and the minister has been clear that water isn't in scope. This makes no sense. Minister, maybe she could answer my question about the approval that was granted in the last question, or she could tell us why water isn't in the scope of this consultation.

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the NDP position on coal is quite confusing and hypocritical, and, again, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. In fact, on March 13, 2018, in this very Assembly that we're in right now, the Member for Lethbridge-West, then the minister of environment, said in a question about coal, "Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Alberta does have a number of metallurgical coal interests and will continue to develop those." March 13, 2018.

Mr. Schmidt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the minister is eager to hide from her own government's record on coal development and given that this government raced to give Benga its approval and given that they won't undo it today and given that the Minister of Energy has made it clear that she's expecting to allow more harmful coal projects in her new policy and that the consultation that they've launched has been widely panned, including by communications professionals who have said that they've never seen such a terrible survey, doesn't the minister realize that Albertans don't trust her or this government, and will she commit to supporting our private member's bill tomorrow in committee?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when you live in glass houses, you shouldn't throw stones, and that's the NDP's approach to coal. Our consultations, the coal committee consultations, have not even started. They have not even started. They are in a period of time of collecting information and developing an engagement plan, and when they start, they're going to hear from all Albertans on their views on if, and if so, where coal can be developed. Those views of Albertans will cover our policy towards coal.

Trespassing Incident on Enoch Cree First Nation

Mr. Feehan: Yesterday protesters against the closure of the GraceLife church trespassed on the territory of the Enoch Cree First Nation. I was appalled to see a video showing that the vehicle of the chief of the Enoch Cree was vandalized and to hear that racial slurs were thrown at members of the nation. As a result of these actions on Sunday, the nation is setting up security to monitor the situation. Will the minister condemn the actions of these protesters right here and now, and what is this minister doing to help ensure that the territory rights and properties of the Enoch Cree Nation are protected?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our ministry has been in contact with the chief of Enoch Cree Nation and listening to him, the frustration. I do condemn the trespassing on the nation land; it was inappropriate. Our ministry is going to continue to hear from Chief Billy Morin and make sure that we hear from him first and get the information from him and his nation on what can be done to help his nation going forward.

Mr. Feehan: Given that members of the nation had to resort to blocking entrances to the nation to stop the trespass and given that when asked to leave, people started to throw dirt at Chief Morin and his vehicle and given that the nation is now looking into charging people for trespassing, won't the minister agree that members of the nation should not have to put up with a situation like this? Will he unequivocally commit here and now that this government will support the Enoch Cree in charging and prosecuting these trespassers if that's what they decide to do?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are in the process of listening to Chief Billy Morin and understanding what we can do to assist, so of course we are providing that support to him and his nation and will do that going forward.

Mr. Feehan: Given that this event happened on Sunday and given that the people of Enoch Cree would expect that the Minister of Indigenous Relations would support them in protecting their territory from trespassers but as of this morning not a tweet, Facebook post, or public comment from the minister, why has this minister and his government been so silent on this critical issue? Are they listening to the protestors against public health orders, including those from the UCP caucus, more than the people of Enoch Cree, who don't deserve the horrendous atrocities that occurred on Sunday?

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. I know that my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations was in direct contact with Chief Morin over the weekend during the protests to discuss any concerns. According to Chief Morin trespassers went on private Enoch property and parked their vehicles on a private Enoch road. Chief Morin and the RCMP responded to the scene, but some continued to trespass. We, my colleague and our government, stand with Chief Morin in condemning this illegal behaviour and the disrespect shown to their sovereignty as a First Nation. This destructive and disrespectful behaviour will not be tolerated.

Petrochemicals Industry Development

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government invested in petrochemicals through the Alberta petrochemicals incentive program, also known as APIP. APIP provides grants for companies to attract investment in new or expanded market-driven petrochemical facilities. Medical supplies, phones, electronics, and packaging are all examples of petrochemicals. To the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity: how will APIP drive Alberta's economic recovery?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. The petrochemical industry will play a critical role in the continued diversification of the province's economy. Petrochemical products are essential. They're an essential part of daily life, and between our abundant natural gas resources, skilled workforce, and positive business environment, Alberta has absolutely everything we need to produce them for customers around the world. The APIP program has already attracted attention from investors all over the globe, and we expect more applicants in the future.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, given that APIP approved its first grant last week for the Inter Pipeline project, which will be investing in a \$4 billion propane-to-polypropylene plastic facility in Alberta's Industrial Heartland, located in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and given that APIP has been awarded a \$408 million grant, which will be issued once the project becomes operational, to the same minister: what will Inter Pipeline be using the APIP grant for?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Inter Pipeline's heartland petrochemical complex will convert locally sourced, low-cost propane into 525,000 tonnes per year of polypropylene, a high-value, easily transported and recycled multi-use plastic used in manufacturing an extensive range of products such as packaging, textiles, automobile components, health care products, and medical supplies. It will be the first of its kind in North America.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, given that some people have expressed that we should stray away from plastics development as they believe that it is a fad not worth investing in and given that this government knows that it is economically smart to invest in petrochemical development such as a propane-to-polypropylene plastic facility and given that plastics make almost all of our necessities in everyday living, to the same minister: can you tell us what the future is for petrochemicals in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you. The future is extremely bright for the petrochemical sector in Alberta. There are lots of reasons for optimism. Inter Pipeline's APIP funding announcement is the first of many. Our government has seen a significant amount of interest from a number of major companies and investors from all over the world. It's estimated that in the next decade we will see \$30 billion worth of investment into our province's petrochemical sector, resulting in tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans.

COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program in Schools

Ms Hoffman: Albertans knew that variants of concern posed a significant threat to our schools, and that's why on December 18 we called on this government to get ready and bring rapid testing to schools. This current government dithered, and we saw the results. In Athabasca, for example, Edwin Parr composite school has over a hundred cases at one time. It didn't have to be this way. To the minister: why did it take thousands of students getting COVID before she announced rapid testing in some schools?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. The rapid tests were first provided to the province by the federal government. We acted – well, first, actually, it was the decision of Health Canada that rapid tests could not be used for a screening purpose, that they only be used for testing for symptomatic individuals. When Health Canada made the change in their determination and the federal government encouraged us to start using the rapid tests for screening, then we did begin to do the work to not only provide them to schools but also other workplaces throughout the province.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: Given that we've had the more deadly and transferable variants getting into our schools and that the government took no action and given that this government had a stockpile of 1.6 million rapid tests but decided to leave them on a shelf as variant cases skyrocketed and tens of thousands of students, staff, and families were forced into isolation and given that more than 400 schools are either on alert or have outbreaks, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he put forward a whole set of recommendations to ensure that schools will be safe and that parents can support their learning? Why won't he go to cabinet and fight for these families to get the supports that they need when kids are forced to learn from home?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, none of that was true. I will repeat my answer to the previous question, which is this: when the rapid tests were provided to the province, it was Health Canada's direction that they could not be used for a screening purpose. They had to be used only for testing symptomatic individuals. It was only until the decisions were made by the federal government that the rapid tests could be used for a different purpose, for a screening purpose. Then we developed the plan to be able to use them for a screening purpose in workplaces throughout the province, including the schools, in consultation with Education and some of the school divisions throughout the province.

Ms Hoffman: Given that we've got over 400 schools on alert or outbreak status with new variants spreading rapidly and given that the best this minister can offer, rapid testing, is over a hundred days delayed from when it could have come into Alberta and been helpful in schools, it's no wonder why a year into the pandemic, with old ventilation systems, overcrowded classrooms, fewer EAs and teachers in schools, and the minister failing to say that teachers are our priority, Albertans have lost confidence in this minister and the Education minister, because it doesn't surprise me.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am surprised that finally the NDP are criticizing the Trudeau government. I will take this feedback from our friends opposite and pass it on to the federal government, the Trudeau government, their frustration that it took the federal government that long for them to give us the direction to be able to use the rapid tests for a screening purpose rather than the previous direction to only use it for symptomatic individuals.

We are frustrated, too. I hear their feedback. I commit to giving the federal government that feedback from the NDP caucus, that they are that frustrated with the federal government. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the call.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum (continued)

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the Calgary board of education announced that it will not pilot the UCP's backwards curriculum. The CBE is the largest board in the province, representing and educating more than 100,000 students. I am hearing from a lot of constituents about how this curriculum is stuck in the past. It's pretty clear that Calgarians have spoken. They don't want the curriculum, but this government isn't listening. What does the minister have to say to all the kids who are capable of so much more than this curriculum will prepare them for?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, as I said earlier today, the purpose of a pilot for the draft curriculum is, in fact, to provide valuable in-classroom feedback to effect potential changes for the final documents. School divisions can opt to pilot all or some of the draft curriculum subjects. For example, they could pilot math or just language arts. If some school divisions do not wish to pilot, they simply will not be able to provide in-classroom feedback, but of course all individual Albertans are able to provide their feedback, including educators and school divisions, through alberta.ca/curriculum.

Ms Ganley: Given that the two largest school boards have said that they won't pilot the curriculum – and they represent more than 200,000 students combined – and given that even boards that might consider piloting the curriculum are calling the social studies curriculum, quote, horrific and given that the minister will only allow teachers who have piloted the curriculum to provide feedback, will the minister apologize to Albertans for attempting to ram this horrific social studies curriculum into Calgary classrooms?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, that is not true. Of course, school boards are still welcome to provide their feedback. They're encouraged to provide their feedback even if they choose to not pilot the new curriculum in the fall. It is ridiculous to claim otherwise. It is absolutely important to remember that this is just a first draft. We have over a year to refine this curriculum and listen to Albertans, including teachers, parents, and subject matter experts. This feedback has already begun to come in, and the Minister of Education is happy to hear it.

Ms Ganley: Given that I'm hearing from parents, from teachers, from employers that this curriculum will take us back 50 years and given that our kids deserve to be prepared to compete globally in a modern economy and given that the UCP's narrow curriculum is failing them, will the current government take out their earplugs, take off their blinders, actually listen to Calgary parents, teachers, employers, and academics who want this curriculum scrapped?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, this new curriculum has taken the feedback from hundreds of Albertans and subject matter experts right across the province in a transparent process that was undertaken starting last year. We campaigned on making sure that

students had strong literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and we have heard excellent feedback on a variety of subject matters from experts right across the province. As we've said before, any Albertans wishing to provide feedback are more than welcome to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has a question.

COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program in Schools (continued)

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ensuring that in-person learning can safely continue is a high priority for our parents and our government. Over the weekend the Premier and the Minister of Education announced that the rapid testing program would be expanded to up to 300 schools in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie. Can the Minister of Education explain why rapid testing is another important tool to keeping our students and staff safe?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every day that students are able to attend school in person is a win during the pandemic. We know that many students learn better with the teacher right in the classroom in an in-class environment. The safety of students and staff has always been and will continue to be our top priority. The significant expansion of the rapid testing program strengthens our commitment to safely continue in-class learning as rapid testing is one more tool to limit the spread of the virus in schools and ensure in-person learning can continue safely.

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

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her answer. Given that some communities outside of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie are also experiencing high numbers of COVID-19 cases and given that there are 440,000 rapid tests available for this program, can the minister explain if schools outside of these four cities will be eligible for the rapid testing program and how those decisions will be made?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. We do in fact plan to offer rapid tests to schools in communities across Alberta if the need is identified by Alberta Health. Alberta Education will work with Alberta Health and school boards to select schools that may benefit from rapid testing. A variety of factors will go into the decision, including the prevalence of COVID-19 in the school and in the larger community. It's important to note that when a school is selected, it does not mean the school is unsafe for students and staff. Screening tests are another preventative tool in addition to measures already in place in schools across the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for her answer. Given that Alberta is one of the first provinces to roll out rapid testing in schools to students and school staff and given that in March the government conducted a rapid testing pilot program in two Calgary schools, can the Minister of Education explain why the government conducted this pilot before broadly rolling out the program and what the results of the pilot were?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, we were able to learn a great deal from the rapid test pilot program. We learned how long it takes to test a certain number of people in a school setting, which helped us determine how the program could then in fact be expanded. Alberta Education received very positive feedback from the two Calgary schools, and we will continue to seek feedback about the testing program as we move forward. Out of the 952 rapid tests done during the pilot program, there were two preliminary positive results. These would then have to be confirmed with an additional test at an AHS assessment centre.

Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by acknowledging a special anniversary, because two years ago the Member for Red Deer-South promised to advocate strongly for the Red Deer hospital, but since that member is more focused on holiday vacations to Phoenix when Albertans were told to stay home and follow public health orders, three days ago the Leader of the Opposition and I stood to call for this government to fulfill their promise and build this hospital. On behalf of the constituents of Red Deer-South: can the Minister of Infrastructure explain what happened to the UCP's promise to build the Red Deer hospital?

2:30

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, through you I want to be crystal clear to all central Albertans that Alberta's government is fully committed to build the Red Deer hospital. We approved \$100 million last year, and important planning work is in progress, unlike when the NDP was in government. They had two local MLAs. They still couldn't get that project on priority. They actually dropped it from the priority list, but all UCP MLAs in central Alberta are pushing for this project. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier promised \$100 million for this project and this year's budget only has \$5 million for the hospital – what a shame – and given that the Member for Red Deer-South described the need for the Red Deer hospital saying, quote, some life-and-death services are not being provided, and they should, end quote, but given that instead of funding these life-and-death services the UCP is wasting its money on its no-jobs corporate handout and its laughingstock of a war room, can the Minister of Infrastructure explain to the people of Red Deer why insulting reporters and plagiarizing logos are bigger priorities than the life-and-death needs of central Albertans?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, large-scale projects like hospital projects require a clinical services plan, business plan, functional programming, design, and construction. All of that is under way, and you also know that during the pandemic there is a challenge, because it's an operational facility. In that hospital expansion requires careful planning, and AHS is busy dealing with the pandemic and vaccinating people, but we are making progress.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is spending more money plagiarizing logos than they are on the Red Deer hospital and given that Red Deer is also represented by a cabinet minister, the Minister of Education, and given that clearly she advocated for money to build some schools in Alberta – mind you not in major cities – but given when it comes time for the minister to advocate for her own constituents and the long-awaited

hospital expansion in Red Deer that they elected the UCP to build and given that I'm getting no straight answers here from the Minister of Infrastructure, will the Minister of Education rise in this House and explain to her constituents why she has failed to address the health care needs of her constituents and secure money for the Red Deer hospital?

Mr. Panda: Both Red Deer MLAs and all government MLAs from central Alberta have been strong advocates. At least they bother me, they bother the Health minister, they bother the Finance minister, and they even talk to the Premier. In fact, I look forward to sharing the status of all the infrastructure projects in the Red Deer area through chamber of commerce this week. Stay tuned.

AISH and Income Support Payments and Benefits

Ms Renaud: When the UCP changed AISH and income support payment dates last year to cook their books, they caused preventable problems. Last week one of my constituents who lives on income support was evicted from her affordable apartment in St. Albert. She started renting three months ago, and every month since her income support payment has been late, resulting in a court-ordered eviction. She's been told she can't get her possessions until she pays storage fees. Now she's in a homeless shelter. Minister, will you commit to making this right today?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, of course, if the member opposite has any specific cases, the first thing that I would encourage their constituent to do is to contact their caseworker for individual supports. I will say that I know the Minister of Community and Social Services has spoken a number of times in the House about why the payment date change was made to be at the first of the month, and it really was to provide more consistency in the schedule for Albertans. It does allow clients to receive their payments at the same time each month, but as I said, if there is a specific case, please contact your caseworker.

Ms Renaud: Given the steady and destructive removal of income support supplemental benefits by the UCP, we know that even more Albertans are at risk of homelessness in the middle of a pandemic and given that we know the income support additional shelter benefit of \$307 a month often is the difference between having a home and being homeless – the minister continues to say it's just policy compliance – will the minister listen to Albertans whose lives are being devastated by these cuts by the systematic removal of supplemental benefits to income support?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Community and Social Services has said a number of times in this House, the government has reviewed these programs, including AISH and income support, to make sure that we're focusing on ways of delivering the programs more sustainably so that these vital supports can be available to all Albertans not only now but in the future, for those Albertans who need it. There are no planned changes to the eligibility criteria or benefit rates at this time. Any proposed changes will, of course, aim to improve services for Albertans and simplify program delivery.

Ms Renaud: Given that the UCP has in essence saved millions of dollars because so many income support recipients have been temporarily transferred to federal benefits and given that the UCP's short-sighted cuts are demonstrably hurting Albertans, will the

minister commit to restoring income support supplemental benefits to Albertans even in advance of the upcoming judicial review?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite has alluded to and as I've heard debated a number of times in this House, current AISH and income support caseloads have dropped off due to the effects of the pandemic and the availability of federal recovery supports. While income support cases in the expected to work category generally increase with the unemployment rate, current caseload growth has been offset by this uptake in these COVID supports. We will continue to keep the most vulnerable in mind and ensure that we as a government are there to support them during this difficult time.

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

Freedom to Care Act

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Charities in Alberta are at the forefront of building strong communities and helping those who need help. Unfortunately, like many things, government has the tendency to get in the way. To the minister: how will the Freedom to Care Act remove these barriers, helping rather than hindering charities?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. We're really, really excited about the Freedom to Care Act. It is there to help charities and make it easier for them to have access to exemptions. We noticed, especially during COVID, how important that was, just to keep them very effective in their communities to be able to do social good, so we're hoping, if it passes in the Legislature, that this will allow cabinet, through an order in council, to be able to grant exemptions to nonprofits and to be able to help them do the work, because a lot of the regulations that are there are actually huge barriers to nonprofits being able to do social good.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her work on this file. Given that not-for-profits are the cornerstone of charitable work in this province and given that in some cases big government blocks us from being a good neighbour, from being able to help our neighbours in need, to the minister: how are you and your ministry working with charities and civil society to ensure that their clients are not denied services due to unnecessary red tape?

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. A lot of times it is red tape in the government that's actually stopping these organizations from being able to do really great work. We've covered some of the examples in the past, but one of the things we're really excited for, should this pass, is to be able to have a central website where everyone can actually access these already existing exemptions. One of the things that the legislation shone a light on is the existing exemptions but also the ability to find other exemptions in times of crisis. In the meantime, though, if the nonprofits are needing any help at all, please call 310.0000 for general inquiries around existing . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for her work in engaging charities. Given that the goal is to increase the opportunity for Albertans to be able to get involved in their communities to be able to help those around them, I guess, can the minister share how the Freedom to Care Act will create the opportunity for more Albertans to become involved in their communities in this way?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, when COVID first hit, one of our largest groups of people, which is our senior citizens, became our most vulnerable population. Through the Alberta Cares Connector we were able to connect a lot of people to charities and other organizations to help them. What we're hoping for with the passage of this legislation is to be able to have some liability protection for those volunteers.

I'd also like to take this time to remind Albertans to please nominate extraordinary volunteers for the Stars of Alberta award. More information can be found at alberta.ca.

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

2:40 Support for Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last year businesses have been struggling to balance their operations with public health restrictions to the detriment of their finances. This is not sustainable for them. When the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant was introduced, it provided some help to struggling businesses to cover their overhead costs and allow them to continue operating and serving Albertans' needs. Can the minister please provide an update on the effectiveness of the small and medium enterprise relaunch grants that have been given to businesses in Alberta?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The small and medium enterprise relaunch grant has had nearly 100,000 applicants requesting over \$650 million in funding. Those businesses employ over 300,000 Albertans, and they range from everyone from restaurants to gyms, retail, and other small businesses. Our SME relaunch grant is critical support for many of these businesses and was recently identified by the Calgary Chamber of commerce as one of the most accessed programs of any level of government.

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the small and medium enterprise grants have provided hundreds of millions to support tens of thousands of businesses in Alberta and further given that we are now in our third round of restrictions, which impact very small businesses from mom-and-pop shops to restaurants, to the minister: what other supports can small businesses in our communities access so that they can continue operating?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We provided the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant as well as hundreds of millions in Workers' Compensation Board premium relief, corporate tax relief, tourism levy abatement, commercial rent

assistance, education property tax relief, and more. Federally, small businesses can access the emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account as well as the Canada emergency rent subsidy. We know that these measures have been hard on small businesses. That's why we're providing support.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from many businesses and associations in my constituency who are having issues connecting with Biz Connect and further given that many businesses, including new businesses, still might not know what supports are available to them and how to safely operate during the pandemic, again to the same minister: what is the government doing to improve how businesses interact with Biz Connect and find the resources that they need to stay open?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Biz Connect has answered tens of thousands of e-mails and queries from business owners and nonprofits as they navigate the guidelines. As we move through these restrictions, we've ensured that any inquiries are provided with the most up-to-date information possible. We've more than tripled the number of people on the team answering queries, and we're working with Health and Alberta Health Services to ensure that we're addressing concerns as quickly as possible.

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 Calgary-McCall.

Ramadan

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week will mark the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. I would like to wish all Albertans and the broader Muslim community observing Ramadan a safe and blessed Ramadan. It's a special time for self-restraint, prayers, and spiritual growth. It's a time to reflect on the plight of those who are suffering for any reason and are in need of help and care. It's a time to strengthen bonds with the Creator and His creation. It's a time for our community to come together as well. We need to take a stand against Islamophobia and racism that we see in our communities and the brazen, hate-motivated attacks on Muslim women. I know there are so many Muslims in Alberta who fear for their safety in their own community. It doesn't have to be this way.

I hope that this Ramadan serves as a reminder to all of us of the power of the collective and of how people can overcome great challenges by working together and standing up for human rights and against racism in all its forms. I also recognize that this Ramadan will be different again this year because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the threat it poses to our collective well-being. I'm sure that the community will be able to come together in faith to observe Ramadan in ways that are safe and respectful of everyone's health and well-being and look out for those who need help and are impacted by this pandemic.

With that, best wishes to all observing Ramadan, and Ramadan Mubarak. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Ramadan Mubarak to you, sir.
The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Spruceview Lodge in Whitecourt

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, I have many great seniors' facilities in my riding. I want to highlight one facility in particular, Spruceview Lodge in Whitecourt. Spruceview Lodge residents and staff have all received their vaccinations already and are incredibly relieved and grateful. Visiting seniors' facilities is an incredible honour for me, but COVID-19 has made that very difficult, obviously. Whenever I do get a chance to visit the facilities, it allows me to reminisce about the last time I was able to see my own grandmother, when she was in a care home. Her interaction with the staff was quite priceless, actually.

Spruceview Lodge is a special place for me because I was able to bring my newborn babies in for a visit a couple of years ago. Many residents still tease me that I shouldn't be coming in unless I bring my kids. It's always a pleasure to interact with Claude Gould at the lodge. Claude has a particular affinity for politics and always has some great questions to ask. He and Sheila Warchola don't wait for me to stop by; they will actually reach out to my office whenever they have concerns. Erna Heward, the grandmother of a friend of mine, always asks about my kids and assures me that she's praying for me.

Whenever I do visit, I get to spend some time talking to Whitecourt royalty, Irma "Granny" Gray. Irma has run a catering business and volunteered in Whitecourt for decades. In fact, she even won the 2011 Alberta volunteer citizen of the year award. Irma loves to proudly display one of her treasured photographs from 2012, when she was presented with the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee medal by our then MP the hon. Rob Merrifield. This medal was to honour significant contributions and achievements by Canadians. The community of Whitecourt will attest that "Granny" Gray was and is more than deserving. I am proud to have personally received one of Irma's famous cookbooks a number of years ago for a wedding present. Irma still has so much energy and spirit. Her willingness to lend a hand to help others is still an inspiration in the Whitecourt community.

I'd like to say thank you to Irma, residents of the lodge, and Diane Robbins, the site manager of the lodge, for your resiliency and perseverance. I know that the last year has provided many struggles and much uncertainty, but you have met it head-on. I'm extremely proud of the efforts you have all put in.

Notices of Motions

Mrs. Savage: I rise to give oral notice of three government motions.

First is Government Motion 72, in the name of the hon. Premier, that a humble address be presented to Her Majesty the Queen as follows:

To Her Majesty the Queen:

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, wish to express the deepest sympathies of this Assembly on the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh and the heartfelt thanks of this Assembly and the province of Alberta for his unfailing dedication to Canada and the Commonwealth, exemplified in his distinguished service in the Royal Navy in the Second World War, his commitment to young people in setting up the Duke of Edinburgh award, his passionate commitment to the environment, and his unrelenting support to Your Majesty throughout his life.

I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 73 in my name.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 56, Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

And Government Motion 74 in my name:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 56, Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, is resumed, not more than one hour be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Bill 66

Public Health Amendment Act, 2021

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and request leave to introduce Bill 66, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2021.

This bill is the next step to modernize the Public Health Act, which is one of the oldest laws in the province. Let me say, first, that the health and safety of all Albertans is and always will be top priority for Alberta's government. A modernized Public Health Act will continue to help government respond to public health emergencies quickly and effectively while keeping Albertans at the centre of all decisions and actions.

I hereby move first reading of Bill 66, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2021.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 66 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Parks.

2:50

Bill 64

Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Parks to introduce Bill 64, the Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021.

If passed, this bill will allow the Minister of Environment and Parks to collect fees for the use of, occupation of, and for activities on public land. Mr. Speaker, more Albertans than ever are enjoying recreation opportunities on provincial Crown land, and the landscape needs resources to manage this and to support conservation. Stable funding is needed to keep these beloved destinations sustainable for future generations to enjoy, and Bill 64 will ensure that.

I'm pleased to introduce the Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021, for first reading on behalf of my hon. colleague.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 64 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 2

The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill, that being Bill Pr. 2, The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021.

The United Church of Canada undertook a restructuring and modernization process of their governance, which required some amendments to the federal act and now requires concurrent amendments to the provincial act. I am honoured that the United Church of Canada reached out to me for assistance with their important work of care, community, and fellowship, for which I and many Canadians are deeply grateful. I present this private bill on their behalf.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert has a tabling.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two surveys that were conducted through my office for income support recipients and AISH recipients, and we had over a thousand people reply.

The Speaker: Members, we are at points of order. At 1:52 the Deputy Opposition House Leader raised a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), (j), and (l). At approximately 1:54, without the benefit of the Blues, I believe the hon. Premier said, with respect to the Leader of the Opposition, “Stop making things up.”

Mr. Speaker, it is well established in this place – and you have ruled very recently – that phrases with words such as “lying” are unparliamentary in this place, and as we know, you have also ruled that you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly. As such, I ask that, because the Premier directly implied that the Leader of the Opposition was misleading or lying to this place, he withdraw and apologize for that remark.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out for consideration and with interest that the NDP has insisted on a different set of rules previously, when they were in opposition, but today they’re looking at a totally different playbook. Today they’re taking offence when the Premier pointed out that the Leader of the Opposition needs to stop making things up. I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, but I have what I understand the Premier was saying: can the member “please follow the science and stop making things up.”

I note that the Leader of the Opposition didn’t have any problem with that phrase when she was the Premier. Back on November 20, 2018, the following exchange occurred here in this building, in this room. This can be found on page 1986 of *Hansard* for that day – and, interestingly, it’s about the Northern Gateway pipeline – where she said: “. . . Northern Gateway was managed by the former Conservative government, of which the member opposite was a part. Take some responsibility. Also, he should stop making things up . . .” After arguments were made, the Deputy Speaker ruled the following: the hon. Premier did not accuse the Leader of the Official Opposition of intentional falsehood or lying. As noted in *Beauchesne’s* paragraph 494, “It is not unparliamentary . . . to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the

facts.” Again, this is a difference in how things are interpreted and not a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the NDP can’t have it both ways and cry foul over language that the Leader of the Opposition herself used in this Chamber in 2018, approximately two and a half years ago. I strongly suggest that this is not a point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. members, thank you, both House leaders, for your submissions. I do have the benefit of the Blues, and as the Deputy Government House Leader has recalled for us – she was very accurate in her assessment – the benefit of the Blues says, “I would ask the member to please follow the science and stop making things up.” I am also very familiar with the ruling that was made on November 20, 2018, when the then Deputy Speaker – the current Government House Leader, then the Opposition House Leader, did raise a point of order on the then Premier, now Leader of the Opposition, for using the exact same language in almost the exact same context with respect to an individual making things up.

I think what I did say last weekend – obviously, members will know there isn’t a clear, hard set of rules around language that’s used inside the Assembly and that it is often the context in which it is used. I think I have provided some comment about members using statements like “deliberately misleading the House.” Certainly, I have provided extensive comments on the use of the word “lying.” I’d provide some general caution today, but in my opinion this hasn’t met the threshold of a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

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

Bill 206

Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

[Debate adjourned March 15: Mr. Nielsen speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has seven minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks, and there are 19 minutes of debate remaining on Bill 206 prior to the mover having the opportunity to close debate, which will take five – oh, sorry. Correction: included are the five minutes for the mover to close debate, so there are approximately 12 minutes remaining in debate, of which seven minutes are allotted to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

The hon. member.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to add a few sort of final comments for myself from this stage of debate on Bill 206, a bill that certainly has some significant ramifications going forward. It was unfortunate that the private members’ committee, which I sit on as a member, didn’t get the opportunity to maybe explore more of the bill through stakeholder engagement and whatnot. I know that some of my colleagues and I have some concerns around that because of different ramifications that it has across all the different bills that it does touch.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The fact that we have a private member that is bringing forward legislation that clearly the government should have been dealing with I think is, I guess, disappointing around that. My hope is that as we move forward, we’ll get an opportunity, ask some more

questions, maybe get some answers, and maybe, possibly look at other alternatives around how we can move forward so that we don't end up with, as members of the government like to say, unintended consequences around some of these changes.

I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar has a lot more to say on this, so with that, I think I will cede the rest of my time to allow that debate to take place, but I appreciate the chance to add some comments.

3:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my friend from Edmonton-Decore for opening up debate on this subject. I know that we don't have a whole lot of time left for debate, but I do want to rise and perhaps raise some issues that I hope the mover of this bill or any of her colleagues in the government caucus can address at some point in future debate because there are a couple of items in this legislation that cause me some concern, and I hope that members of the government caucus can allay those concerns.

The first is in section 19. It's proposing to add a section that gives rights to damages for a holder of statutory consent. Now, I'm hoping that perhaps the mover of the bill or any of her colleagues in caucus can tell us what the extent of those damages are and how that changes the compensation regulations that already exist under the existing statutes.

I'm thinking in particular of this issue of revoking coal leases in the event of prohibiting coal mining in the eastern slopes because right now, if a company was granted a lease to mine coal, the government could say: no; we have decided not to allow coal mining to go forward in that area, and we are revoking your lease, and we will compensate you for the amount of money that you paid for your lease or for the fair market value that that lease is expected to get in the open market. But they're not entitled to any more compensation than that under the current system, Mr. Speaker. If Gina Rinehart and her Australian billionaire compatriots were to come forward and try to sue the government for taking away their coal leases for economic damages, the current legal framework would prevent that from happening so that the people of Alberta could rightly have control over the destiny of their natural resources and their ability to say no to development in areas that are deemed to be too sensitive and deemed to be worthy of environmental protection.

My fear is that the way that this piece of legislation is written is that it would change that framework and allow these kinds of coal companies to now sue the government of Alberta for economic damages and potential economic losses because the government of Alberta has said no to allowing those coal mines to happen. I don't know if that's the case, so I would appreciate if the mover of this bill or any of her fellow government caucus colleagues could stand up and clarify that point, because I'm sure that the government caucus is not eager to allow Australian coal companies to sue the government for changes to coal leases, for example. I mean, the government has already revoked some coal leases that were granted in December of 2020. Do they now want to open themselves up to be sued for economic damages as a result of revoking those coal leases? I don't think they do, and this is what I fear would happen if this particular clause in the legislation were passed. I am willing to be corrected on that point, though, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece of this legislation that I want to draw members' attention to is the changes to the Responsible Energy Development Act. Now, I certainly appreciate what I think is the intent of the

mover of this bill because we all know how difficult it is to get standing as a person directly affected by an application that is made to the Alberta Energy Regulator or other regulators that are affected by this act. It is incredibly frustrating for many people who have legitimate concerns to have their statements of concern considered in the application process for a number of applications. In fact, I asked the Minister of Energy just this afternoon about one such application that Benga Mining made for a temporary diversion licence for their coal exploration program.

Now, the fact is that had the public even been given enough time to understand that that application was before the regulator and submit statements of concern, most of those statements of concern would have been rejected because under the narrow definition that is currently used by the Alberta Energy Regulator of directly affected, most statements of concern are rejected out of hand.

Now, what this legislation proposes to do, as I understand it, is to put a positive responsibility – I'm not exactly sure – a positive obligation on the Energy Regulator to notify people when they may be directly affected by applications that are being considered by that regulator, which is fine. I think that that is a good thing because there are many people who could potentially be directly affected by these applications who have no idea that the Energy Regulator is even considering them, especially considering that the Energy Regulator makes any member of the public pay \$30 just to have access to an application that's before them so that they could understand what's happening and understand how they may be directly affected. My fear is that the Energy Regulator, even though they will be given this positive obligation, will still use that incredibly narrow definition of directly affected and not notify anybody who may have an interest or concern in these kinds of applications that are before the regulator.

What I would like to see in this legislation is a definition of directly affected that actually corresponds to the Court of Queen's Bench ruling in a matter that was recently decided. Forgive me; I don't have the details in front of me, but essentially what happened: the case revolved around the waste disposal of naturally radioactive materials, and a company wanted to intervene in that case. The Energy Regulator or the responsible regulator – I don't remember if it was the Energy Regulator or not – said that, no, they weren't considered directly affected under the legislation. They took the regulator to court. The Court of Queen's Bench said that, yes, actually, they should be considered directly affected and, oh, by the way, the government of Alberta has been using an incredibly narrow definition of directly affected in considering all of these matters, and, in fact, people who have been deemed not to be directly affected should have been considered to be directly affected, not just in that particular case that was heard by the Court of Queen's Bench but in many other cases before that.

So I appreciate the intent of this legislation. I expect that many members of the government caucus, as we do here in the Official Opposition, hear from people who cannot have their statements of concern heard because they're deemed by the Energy Regulator to not be directly affected, and that should not stand. The government should go back to the drawing board and come back with a piece of legislation that defines "directly affected" as was set out in that ruling by the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Speaker, those are my concerns. I'm concerned that we may be opening the government of Alberta to unfair lawsuits or allowing people to sue the government for damages when they have statutory consents removed. I also have many concerns about the lack of a clear definition of directly affected under the Responsible Energy Development Act. I urge government caucus members, if they have information that they can provide the House, to clarify a couple of these issues if they can do so so that we can vote accordingly. I

appreciate the government's attention to this issue, and I look forward to them having the ability to explain that to members of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to rise and speak to Bill 206, known as the Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. Now, Alberta, of course, has been labelled one of the most beautiful places in the world as our province spans from large mountain ranges to beautiful countrysides all over our province. We are very fortunate to have the opportunity of private ownership of Alberta's beautiful landscapes. I'm going to speak specifically to Highwood. It's close to an urban centre, but it's got some very vast rural landscapes.

This is a very important bill to those in rural Alberta. Their land is more than just a scenic place for them to live. For many, their land is built on many generations of hard work and their shared family ownership, that have led to providing them a livelihood, and that's ingrained within the land that they own. These rural Albertans preserve their livelihoods through this land with the sustainable practices of ranching, agriculture, and multiple other businesses such as even tourist activities.

3:10

Now, Alberta's rural landowners are a large part of promoting Alberta on the global stage for their land practices, innovations, agriculture, farming. They're crucial to building our province and its economy overall. Now, rural Albertan landowners are agricultural experts who are always leading the world in efficacy, environmentalism, and sustainability within their industry as a whole. These people have shown time and time again their ability to consistently supply sustainable agriculture products as well as finding a new approach to old practices that will change the future of agriculture.

Now, within this bill – and members have brought this up – there are some big changes. There's impacted legislation across five different pieces, including the Alberta Bill of Rights, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, Land Titles Act, Limitations Act, and Responsible Energy Development Act. I think it's important to bring that up, some of the highlights of this. This is not just, you know, window-dressing legislation. This is something that is seriously dedicated to addressing and supporting and providing security to those landowners that invest in our province.

You know, Bill 206 will add, within the Alberta Bill of Rights, that the law allows the government to acquire private property. A person is then entitled to full, fair, and timely compensation and recourse to the courts to determine the amount of that compensation. Now, these are the types of things contained within this bill that give strength and investor confidence, that are going to help build that strong economy within Alberta. It provides that surety to investors that come here that they will have a right and a proper recourse in case their land is necessary for other purposes.

Let's be focused on that, okay? Landowner property rights are very crucial, and that's why the protection of the property rights is so incredibly important to our province. The ownership of land is not only a means of generating income that supports families and communities; in many cases it's connected to their family as well as their family traditions. Furthermore, this land is crucial to rural communities to help to build their community as a whole and sustain those communities.

Unfortunately, government across all levels within the province has autonomy to take legal land that is in private use such as family

farms and ranches and to use it for public land. Through this annexation of the families' land, taking this away, this process opens up the possibility of a family's businesses and its practices being severely damaged or even, in some cases, completely removed. For example, if a constituent in rural Alberta owns a plot of land where a government wishes to build a highway – and this is just a simple example – nothing is stopping the government in power taking a section of this privately owned land to convert it into that highway. This will ultimately take away the rural Albertan's land ownership and ability to further continue with its business operations.

Additionally, this will take away the prideful feeling . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I apologize for interrupting the hon. Member for Highwood. However, under Standing Order 8(7) we have reached the end of the allotted time for debate on this matter. As such, I will now put the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:14 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Issik	Pancholi
Allard	Loewen	Panda
Amery	Long	Phillips
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Lovely	Renaud
Dang	Nally	Rutherford
Dreeshen	Neudorf	Sigurdson, L.
Ellis	Nicolaides	Sigurdson, R.J.
Fir	Nielsen	van Dijken
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yaseen
Irwin		

3:30

Totals: For – 28 Against – 0

[Motion for second reading of Bill 206 carried unanimously]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Camrose has risen.

Ms Lovely: Pursuant to Standing Order 78.1(1) I would move that Bill 206, Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, be referred to the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 78.1(1) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Motion carried]

Bill 207

Reservists' Recognition Day Act

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be here today to move second reading of Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act.

The reserve force is an invaluable component of the Canadian Armed Forces. They are citizen soldiers who give up their time on

weekends, summers, and evenings to train and to be part of the Canadian Armed Forces. Reservists are a vital part of the Canadian military and defending Canada's security in time of crisis. Each of the four components of the reserve force is integral to this defence role. The primary reserve consists of army, navy, and air. The force supplements the Canadian Armed Forces at home and internationally with 143 units throughout 177 cities and towns in Canada.

The primary reserve also includes the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, capable of responding to terrorist threats, and the Health Services Reserves, comprised of over 1,700 health professionals who are trained to be integrated into the regular forces' health services and are vital to community and outreach. The Judge Advocate General Reserve is the sixth component of the primary reserve and consists of approximately 63 legal officers who provide military legal advice, both at home and abroad. The supplementary reserves are former members of the regular and reserve forces who can be called to serve in times of emergency. They are not required to perform military duties or training except in times of need. They may, however, volunteer for a specified term in support of a specific operation.

Then, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I missed out on that I should have done was in the cadets. The cadet organization in training service are reserve officers responsible for the safety and training of youth enrolled in the cadet program. Many officers are former cadets themselves who give back to the program in recognition of how valuable the leadership, survival, and collaboration skills are.

Lastly, the Canadian Rangers protect our country in often remote and uniquely challenging areas. Part of the Rangers' responsibility is reporting suspicious activities as well as collecting local information of military significance. These Rangers have a unique understanding of their local areas and possess specialized expertise specific to the region, and they also contribute greatly to search-and-rescue missions.

Collectively these branches of the reserve forces are imperative to protecting Canadians and, of course, Albertans. Throughout history the reserve forces have augmented various operations. Between 2001 and 2014 the reserves contributed at times up to 20 per cent of the personnel requirements of the Canadian Armed Forces operations in Afghanistan. Examples such as this, paired with the assessment of future needs, shaped Canada's most recent defence policy, which highlighted the necessity for enhanced integration between the reserves and the regular forces.

The 2017 Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy clearly defined the vision for Canada's reserve force and identified reserve participation as a full-time capability through part-time service. Strong, Secure, Engaged fundamentally changed the way reservists are recruited, trained, and equipped to meet Canada's defence needs and community support.

Strong, Secure, Engaged also reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, as a staple of our security. Formed in 1949 to provide the alliance with collective security against the threat of the Soviet Union, NATO continues to be a critical force in ensuring global security. Given that NATO does not have its own reserve force, it relies on its member countries' reserve forces to be strong and ready to defend at a moment's notice should one of its 30 member countries face a threat.

Here in Alberta the primary reserve is home to more than 2,100 reservists, who actively train and study to support these pillars of security and freedom. Many reservists have families they support, and they sacrifice their time with spouses, children, and friends in order to train and be ready to serve, and of course the spouses, the children, the parents, and the families of these reservists also make

daily sacrifices and give tirelessly to hold down the fort while their reserve force member trains.

These exceptional skills and qualities that are gained through a member and their family's participation in the reserves are invaluable to Alberta communities. In addition to the critical and specific training they receive, they are an epitome of discipline and perseverance. They provide a connection to our local communities and promote the idea of citizenship through service to the country. Not only have reservists volunteered to protect our values and way of life from threats abroad, but they have continuously shown up in times of need here in the province of Alberta. They were ready to serve on scene during massive provincial disasters like Alberta's recent fires and floods.

These reservists and their families are our peers, colleagues, and community leaders. In my time in the Edmonton Police Service I worked with members of the reserves and was proud to do so, and of course we all work with members of the reserves here in the Legislature as well. They are our neighbours, our friends, and our local friendly faces.

Alberta has a rich and proud history of reservists and is a province where regular and reserve force members can feel at home. I also hear regularly, Mr. Speaker, that the men and women in uniform have always found Alberta to be an incredibly welcoming province, and we need to work to maintain that.

I want this recognition day to be about sharing a profound thank you to the reservists and their families but also to highlight the incredible skill sets that reservists possess and to signal to employers the value in hiring a reservist. I am proud to share that the government of Alberta is the largest employer of reserve force members as we recognize the strong leadership skills that members bring and accept that the time they require, taking leave for training, only improves those exceptional leadership qualities.

The Canadian Forces Liaison Council, Mr. Speaker, is an organization of more than 140 Canadian volunteers who work in partnership with the defence team to engage employers, educational institutions, and other organizations to emphasize how valuable the reserve service is to our communities, our province, and our country. The last Saturday of September was chosen through consultation with the CFLC and other stakeholders of the military community. Together we worked to explore the most opportunistic day to recognize our reservists.

Mr. Speaker, headquartered in Calgary is the 41st Canadian Brigade Group and the army reserve formation of the 3rd Canadian division. The 41st Brigade Group consists of approximately 1,700 reserve members throughout nine units across Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Yellowknife, and the Northwest Territories. The commander of the 41st Canadian Brigade Group, Colonel Mike Vernon, was pleased to hear of this initiative and suggested that it align with the Canadian Forces open house and reserve recruitment day as a provincial day of recognition on this same day will create many synergies for reserves and allow reserve participation on the reservist recognition day to be fully maximized. In working with these stakeholders, it is my hope that this Alberta-born initiative can be taken across the country.

It is important to reiterate the valuable skills that reservists have and to recognize their service. Hiring a reservist will bring valuable leadership skills, knowledge, and discipline, and they will be a strong member of any organization.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to move this bill forward in recognition of our reserves and the hard work of our Canadian Armed Forces. As military liaison I've had an opportunity to visit with members of our Canadian Armed Forces these last two years, and it's been an absolute privilege to do so. They are an incredibly hard-working group of men and women who are very proud of their skills and the

work that they do, and this is just another way to say thank you, amongst many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has risen.

3:40

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to add my voice to the debate on Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act. Certainly, I just want to say on behalf of the NDP caucus how grateful we are for the contributions of the reservists, the service that they do on behalf of us in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Certainly, I just want to talk a little bit about how as Minister of Seniors and Housing in the previous NDP government I worked very closely with the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs, who is the representative still in the role of critic but also at that time, when we were government. We know that the work our government did at that time was, you know, leading in Canada, and we put forward many, many initiatives to support reservists. Certainly, I know that the Member for Edmonton-Castle-Downs still has a very close relationship with our royal Canadian Armed Forces, and we're certainly very grateful for all their service.

My understanding of this bill is that a specific day, different than the current day that recognizes the royal Canadian Armed Forces, which is the first Sunday in June, is being sort of, I guess, separated out from the rest of the Armed Forces specifically for reservists. I guess I have a question, just to the member, about: how come this is happening? Certainly, they are part of the royal Canadian Armed Forces and deserve to be recognized along with them. When we were government, in any of the consultations or connections that, certainly, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs had, that I've had, that many members on this side of the House have had, this has never been a priority for the reservists. They appreciate being recognized with the rest of the Armed Forces. They see themselves as part of that and that they don't need to be sort of carved out from that group for a separate day.

I'm just curious, and I guess I ask the member: who did you speak to in your consultation? You did speak briefly to that, "Yes, we consulted," but I'm just a bit confused, because certainly that is not the information that we're getting from reservists. They actually appreciate being acknowledged with the larger group because they are one with the royal Canadian Armed Forces. So I do ask that member, you know: who has he heard from that requires this or desires this?

They are moving them outside of that June acknowledgement to a September one. As we know, September is a month that is often almost, for many of us, a busy time because a lot of things start again. You know, that's the beginning of the school year, the postsecondary academic year oftentimes. Oftentimes that's after our summer break, and people are getting back into work of all kinds. Certainly, the reservists are no different. That's kind of also why I do ask: why was that particular time chosen? Again, was that done in consultation with reservists? How come that specific day and month were selected?

We also recognize reservists for their work. We know very much how much they support us here in Alberta and certainly across Canada, but this bill, of course, is for Alberta. We, when we were in the NDP government, certainly worked very closely with them, and I know the reservists, because they have a lot of unique concerns, would meet with the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs regularly to discuss, you know, oftentimes many challenges that people have, different challenges they have because of their unique role.

Certainly, one of the things that we're very proud of as government is that we opened a seniors' Veterans Service Centre and transitional housing for homeless veterans in December 2018, and this is, you know, the first of its kind, sort of a one-of-a-kind facility here in Edmonton. Certainly, we're very proud of that, and that sort of was part of our \$1.2 billion investment in affordable housing, but this housing was focused specifically on people who were part of the royal Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, it's very sad to say, but sometimes the experiences that members of the Armed Forces have put them in harm's way, and they experience trauma from those situations. Sometimes it's very hard for them to cope and manage in regular civilian life when you're back, you know, not in special actions to support us overseas. Certainly, reservists are part of that, too, and sadly, a higher proportion than in other groups oftentimes may end up homeless. That's really something that's very shameful for us. These are people who put themselves in harm's way, dedicated their lives to supporting us as Canadians, as Albertans.

I was very proud that when we were government, our province did create a Veterans Service Centre. It was really a bit of a one-stop shop, really helping people overcome barriers to their healthy functioning in society. I mean, these are things that are very key and very important to the Canadian Armed Forces. This is the type of recognition and support they need. I guess, I'm just questioning, you know, and certainly encouraging the UCP government to also listen to reservists, listen to Canadian Armed Forces about what they really need. I think that changing a day, carving the reservists out from the larger group is not necessarily a priority, and perhaps it is more ceremonial. What we really heard and what they need are concrete programs with support, something like the Veterans Service Centre and transitional housing for homeless veterans that we opened back in 2018. Of course, it's still serving veterans well.

Other things that we also did was pass legislation in 2016 to recognize PTSD Awareness Day on June 27. Of course, as I said earlier, oftentimes folks who put themselves in these kinds of positions do experience trauma, which can lead to PTSD. Certainly, we want to make sure to educate Albertans about that and be able to make sure that people have the supports and resources they need. We increased access to PTSD service dogs for military and first responders under the Service Dogs Act. Specific agencies to train these dogs were added to the provincial qualified list, so we know that this is something that is very therapeutic for people who have experienced trauma. This is another concrete action that our government undertook to support this population.

We know that reservists aren't oftentimes single people. They have families, and of course it's incumbent on us to provide supports for their families, too. We provided a \$25-a-day daycare at Edmonton and 4 Wing Cold Lake military family resource centre. We granted high school credits for indigenous youth who completed the bold eagle program. Certainly, we were working with CAF MFRC and the government of Alberta to improve health access to services in French for the francophone military community. New government of Alberta dedicated web pages for military families and veterans were available in both English and French. Certainly, we live in the federation of Canada. We are a bilingual country, so it's important for us, even though we're an English-speaking province, that we do offer respect and support in both official languages.

One of the big things that I can just remember from the time when we were government is that when they made the transition, so they moved to Alberta from another province and then they had to wait three months because that's the general waiting time before they could access health care in our province – you know, the Alberta health care card wouldn't come out for that three months.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-South East has risen.

3:50

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act. Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to commend my friend the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont and liaison to Canadian Armed Forces for his hard work and passion on this bill.

Reservists are a crucial part of Canadian Armed Forces. Over 36,000 Canadians are dedicated to serving as reserve personnel. These individuals can be called upon in times of national emergency or threat, and those who serve in the primary reserve are trained to the level of and are interchangeable with their regular force counterparts. They can even be posted to Canadian Armed Forces regular operations on a casual or ongoing basis. The legislation before us would recognize the last Saturday of September in each year as reservists' recognition day. It is important to honour the sacrifices of former reservists and those being made by current reservists and their families.

Reservists have made substantial contributions to Canada's international and domestic operations. Since the year of 2000 more than 4,000 reservists from the army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force have been deployed in international expeditionary operations in Africa, the Middle East, and many other parts of the world. In 2020 the federal government called upon reservists to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic. Here in Alberta reservists assisted with forest fires, including the 2016 Fort McMurray fires. They helped those in distress, assisted with the evacuation of residents in isolated areas and with the transportation of equipment and personnel. In addition, reservists often help at or participate in cultural events, parades, festivals, and other public events in their own and neighbouring communities across Canada, including the recent Remembrance Day ceremonies.

The 41st Canadian Brigade Group is an army reserve formation of the 3rd Canadian Division, and it's headquartered here in Calgary, Alberta. Most of the present-day 41st Canadian Brigade Group soldiers serve part-time while maintaining full-time jobs, studies, and families. They are also dedicated professional soldiers who continue to proudly serve Canada when needed to augment the regular force on deployed missions internationally, including in NATO, United Nations missions, and any other missions here at home. In cases of a severe national emergency an order in council may be signed by the Governor General of Canada, acting under the advice of the federal cabinet, to call reserve members of the Canadian forces into active service.

It is important that we recognize the contribution of those who served and continue to serve our country. These men and women dedicate their lives to protect each of us every day. I'm proud to be supporting this private member's bill, and I want to thank my hon. colleague from Leduc-Beaumont for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to provide some comments in support of the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont's private member's bill before the House, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, Bill 207. I will not rise to speak to private members' business in this House – it's a virtual guarantee – without saying first that I would be happier to provide my comments on this

bill if I thought that it was truly private members' business. I would be happier.

I will still do it and I will still support this bill, of course, because the substance of it is good, but the fact is that the committee process that led this bill to get to this floor is the same committee process that has stymied every single nongovernment caucus private member's bill that has gone to that committee. While this is an excellent and, I think, substantive piece of private member's business and entirely fitting with the hon. member's background, the fact of the matter is that there have been other serious interventions in public policy such as two private members' bills on the topic of public-sector pensions and Canada pension plan that have not moved beyond that committee process in addition to a number of other private members' bills. That is unfortunate, and it does not reflect the highest expression of democracy in this place.

That is what brings me to my comments on the value of reservists, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the value of reservists is to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces has the necessary people and training and skills to both participate in the response to emergencies, as the hon. member previous, from Calgary-South East, talked about, and, of course, when need be, to engage in defence of the country as well.

In all they do, reservists, the contribution that they make to this country is to defend not just the flag – of course, the flag is a piece of fabric; it means very little without values – but it is to make sure that Canada's highest expressions of democracy, of unity, and of understanding that we have a broader purpose and a set of rights and responsibilities that we enjoy because of the people who have served our country under that flag, which is why it is so confusing that we, on the one hand, articulate – well, on this side of the House I'm not confused at all. I think this group of people over here knows exactly where they stand, which is that this is a united country, that we reject these efforts of not just political disagreement or polarization but, in fact, an effort on behalf of some conservatives, who used to be the guardians of that concept of responsibility and unity that used to be the articulation that the conservative parties would oftentimes surface in public debate.

No, but what has happened now is that these political disagreements have come to a place in many corners of conservative thought where the division and the rancour are now existential and seek to undermine the unity and the rights and responsibilities that that flag has represented for many, many years. That is unfortunate indeed. It is unfortunate indeed that that has been given even expression in this House; for example, Mr. Speaker, proposing various separatist adventures indicating that our fellow Canadians, who we also stand here to ensure that we defend their values and their rights and their responsibilities, are hostile, parasitic partners. In fact, the hon. Member for Airdrie-East indicated on November 5, 2019, that there are some Albertans who are struggling to fly the Canadian flag, or struggling to wave the Canadian flag was, in fact, the exact quote. The quote was in the context of the outcome of the federal election, indicating that the federal election result was something that was leading her to struggle to wave the Canadian flag, and the election process pitted neighbour against neighbour.

Now, of course, sometimes we have disagreements with our neighbours, and that is right and good in a democracy. If everyone agreed, we wouldn't have a democracy. We would have some other thing. We want that disagreement. We want that disagreement to be vigorous and substantive, but what we don't do at the end of the day, when we're finished, is talk about how we're struggling to reconcile that democratic exercise with the values of that flag. The values of that flag, as represented both at home when we respond to emergencies with the Canadian Armed Forces, the reservists, or others, are that we care about each other and we have responsibilities to one another. Oftentimes that means moving a sandbag from here

to there, repairing a bridge, moving people out of harm's way. We do that because we have a responsibility to each other, and that is why we uphold the work of the Canadian Armed Forces reservists when they are working with the broader Canadian Armed Forces in massive emergency response, but we also do that because we understand that we don't only have responsibilities here, but we have them abroad as well.

Now, of course, in an ideal world we don't have to leave our borders to defend and articulate those values, but sometimes it does happen, in which case we want to make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces are treated appropriately, which is why the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has undertaken so much work on behalf of military reservists and their families to ensure that in this province they are getting the substantive supports they need such as \$25-per-day daycare in both Cold Lake and in Edmonton, programs that have now, I assume, ceased. But we don't do that just at home. We do it abroad as well because sometimes we have to.

4:00

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the flag is not just important because it is red and white, it is not just important because we've always had it; it is important because it represents our values, our rights, and responsibilities. Otherwise, it's a piece of cloth.

Now, we see this around the world. We saw people, for example, on January 6 wrapping themselves in American flags to go and commit an act of sedition against the democratic exercise. We've seen this, for example – all kinds of countries have flags, right? They have a flag in Hungary, where a brutal and anti-Semitic dictator, Viktor Orbán, continues to, you know, shut down the press and otherwise interfere in elections. The country of Myanmar has a flag, where we are now seeing outright massacre by the military of children. Of course, the country of India has a flag that, in fact, stands for democracy and a post-1947 inclusive society, where sometimes those values are not being upheld, currently, by the government of Narendra Modi, for sure.

Our flag stands for democracy, Mr. Speaker, and a series of ideas that we then articulate by our support for the Canadian Armed Forces because they help ensure that those ideas are there for us if our town is burning down or if, you know, I guess, global security is threatened in some way. And they do that by having the broad support, first of all, of the community and of the broad Canadian public, and that is why I am grateful to the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this piece of business forward under a private member's bill. They do that by providing skills, they do that by providing certainly career opportunities as well, and they do that through ensuring that we have the right emergency capabilities.

Now, also, we value these interventions by the Canadian Armed Forces. There's no question about that. At least I do, so when I see people like the Premier's close economic adviser trotting out op-eds, making up words, 'Albexit,' which doesn't make sense – I'm sure it sounded better in his head when he was writing about it than it does actually saying it out loud – talking about how we need to look at feasible options for a potential breaking up of this country and examining a "nuclear option" – now, Mr. Speaker, I am not at all interested in a nuclear option for this country.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be speaking on Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act. I would, first, like to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this important piece of legislation to the Assembly. It is important that Albertans acknowledge and become informed of important

matters such as those who are brave enough to volunteer and fight for this country. I am proud that this UCP government recognizes the importance of those in the Canadian military as well as the reservists.

In Alberta there are upwards of 2,300 reservists from army, air force, and naval reserve units. The majority of reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in postsecondary studies and are an integral component of the Canadian Armed Forces. They may volunteer themselves for full-time operations or deployment on operations.

Reserve units are located in hundreds of communities across Canada and all around the world. Within Canada the Canadian Army Reserve is consistently part of every domestic operation when the army is called upon to assist provincial governments such as natural disasters. In Alberta they have helped with natural disaster situations such as the Slave Lake and Fort McMurray forest fires as well as the 2013 Calgary floods. They also help out with other events where the army is asked to step in such as the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. In addition, they participated in various military efforts throughout Canadian history. This includes participating in both world wars, volunteering to participate in Afghanistan, and other humanitarian causes throughout our history.

Wherever they may be deployed, reservists have been proven to be very successful around the world. Reservists are brave women and men who are not ordered to participate overseas but volunteer to do so, which puts their civilian lives on hold.

I support this bill not only because of my deep respect for the reservists, but I also have a personal connection to the reservists. My father was a reservist. My grandfather was a member of the Canadian Army and was shot during the First World War, driving at that time an ambulance. My father felt the need to become a reservist because he wanted to fight in the world war, and I was really proud when I found his discharge papers. It made me so proud to see his name on there, on the papers, and I am in fact going to be framing them because it was just a recent find of mine. He actually lied about his age so that he could become a reservist. He was ready to go to war.

He actually showed me how to make a bed properly – that's one of the things they learned – how to polish my shoes. These were multiple things that he showed . . .

Ms Issik: Brass buttons.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Yeah, buttons. Make sure that you sew your buttons on properly.

It taught him a lot of life skills, and we learned those when we went camping because he would find the most remote camping spot in Alberta, I'm sure, and he'd send one of us out with a tiny, little shovel he had, into the bush, and we had to make an outdoor toilet. That was the first thing we did. He also showed me a thousand ways to cook with Spam and how to even open a can of Spam with a knife, how to sharpen a knife on a stone. These are just some of the life skills that really he showed us, right?

He also showed us how to start a fire. He used to laugh because I used to call it tinder, and he said that it's kindling. I don't know if there was a particular word they called this in the army, but he showed me how to do it with one match or for hours trying to use a broken piece of glass, trying to keep his kids busy. You know, we would keep that fire going all night long just so that we could be camping and outdoors with him, and he would summon us to go out there and put another log on the fire. Those were some of the things he showed us. He showed me the proper way to hang a flag. He showed my brothers the proper way to tie a tie. He also showed how

important it is to volunteer, to leave your community, your campsite better than when you came. He'd actually have a broom that he'd sweep the campsite up with just to make sure it was nice for the next person. We'd be picking up the garbage, not even from us.

These are many things that he had learned as a reservist, and I'm very proud that he brought them on to myself. He showed me how to iron clothes, not the way my mom did but the way he did. You know, there are multiple things, and one of the other things that was really important to him was the fact that as a reservist it gave you a great sense of pride for the country that we live in and how important it is that we recognize the people that have sacrificed and volunteer every day just to make our lives better.

He decided to go into the army as a young teenager. Like I said before, he was underage, and he lied about his age. When I found the reservist piece of paper, I'm like: that's not his birth date. He actually lied about it because he wanted to go, and he was bound and determined he was going to risk his life to protect Canadians and defeat the enemy, which was the Nazis. He knew that even though going to war was a dangerous feat and although he was young, he had a sense of duty and courage that made him want to fight for Canadians. One of the things he did was that he left school at the age of 14 to work in a butcher shop to help his family, and he felt the need to join the reserves so that he could go to war. Right before his battalion was about to go and fight, the war had ended, but he was proud to be a reservist. He was trained for any military situation and was ready to go to war if needed.

He actually showed me safe firearms use, too, by the way – that was years ago – and it was good: how to skin a jackrabbit, how to shoot a prairie chicken, and, you know, just basic survival skills. He believed in standing up for his country and protecting the democratic freedoms that we all have. Much like most reservists if not all he was willing to risk his life. I am thankful for these brave women and men who are in the reserves, that volunteer their time to help keep Canadians and people safe overseas or at home.

I believe that recognizing reservists on the last Saturday of September is a great way to honour and show our respect for reservists. The date shown for the reservists' recognition day correlates with the reservists' open house. The open house provides the opportunity for people to visit their facilities and learn about what they do and how people can get involved. Even if you're not wanting to join the reserves, I encourage everyone on this day to talk to someone who is in the reserves and understand their lives, why they joined, and the sense of duty and community that they have.

4:10

I was very, very lucky, like I said, to learn this from my father and his experience being a reservist, but I know that many others have never heard of a reservist or had the opportunity to speak to one. Unfortunately, reservists often get overlooked as people are unaware of their efforts. This is why I'm very thankful for the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for introducing this important piece of legislation. I would also like to thank him for his involvement in serving in the Canadian Armed Forces reserves for two years as well as his continued hard work as the military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces.

I hope that we can honour all reservists through this recognition day as well as honouring my father, who was a reservist. I know that they deserve this as they work hard and are willing to put their lives on hold to keep us safe. I encourage all members to give reservists the respect that they deserve and vote in favour of Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate? I see the hon. member for Edmonton-Decore has risen.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to rise to ultimately speak in support of Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act. You know, like my colleague from Lethbridge-West, I'm disappointed. I've heard the Government House Leader rise in this House several times talking about the important work that private members have in this Chamber as well as bringing forth legislation, but of course, as we've seen, perhaps that should be modified to say: the important work of some private members coming forward in this Chamber. Nonetheless, we do have a piece of legislation here in front of us that I do support.

You know, I guess, in my family history I think back. Both of my parents served in the Canadian Air Force honourably as well as were honourably discharged. I was told that even my grandfather served in both world wars in various capacities. So it's an incredible honour to be able to represent just some of the military families that reside in Edmonton-Decore and, of course, more broadly in northeast Edmonton. I have a great location, where simply driving up for seven minutes on 97th Street I'm there at CFB Edmonton, a place where I spent some time even before I was an elected official. I used to go out there to play basketball and got the opportunity to build some great, great friendships with some of the military personnel out there that also enjoyed that sport as well.

You know, I was just looking at the web page here, and I'm scrolling, scrolling, scrolling through all of the different units that have called CFB Edmonton home at some point or another. I think back, and the last interaction I had before the pandemic was with the 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that the simulator is not as easy as it looks. You would think that as somebody who enjoys video gaming, I could just get right in there and have at it, but uh-uh; there's a whole lot more to that. Just an amazing place to be.

I cannot even begin to express how grateful I am to all the women and men who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces who serve as reservists not only here in Alberta but across the country, just as much it feels inadequate to say just thank you to all our front-line health care workers, to all of our first responders, and, quite frankly, to anybody who is on the front lines dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. To all of them: my heartfelt thanks and gratitude just doesn't seem like enough to be able to do that.

Looking more deeply into Bill 207, you know, one of the things that – I don't want to say that it was bad because it's not; I guess it was just disappointing. I know the Member for Leduc-Beaumont had listed off just some of the consultations that were done, and I do understand that private members have a limited ability to be able to consult. They can't do it at the same level that the government can. I recognize that. But one of the things that I really wasn't able to establish during the private members' committee, that I also sit on, was what was, I guess, being desired by reservists that wasn't already being done while we were recognizing our Canadian military, of which reservists are a part.

You know, for anybody who thinks that reservists are not an integral part, a key component, I would suggest to them that they might want to do a little bit more homework about their importance and the role that they play. As I think we heard from the previous speaker, talk to a reservist and find out what their life is like. One right off the top of my I could say that my city councillor, of course, is a reservist, so I've gotten to see a little bit of that side of things along with the military side of things.

What I'm hoping – of course, I'd never presuppose the decision of the House, but it's sounding like we're heading that way at least, Mr. Speaker – when Bill 207 is moved forward and support is given by this House that the government will step up and actually do concrete things to not only support our reservists but to support our military families as well. I know that my friend from Edmonton-Riverview as well as my friend from Lethbridge-West brought up some of the things that were done while the NDP government was in there.

I know that the Veterans Service Centre was opened up, and my friend from Edmonton-Riverview was part of that. In making that happen, it was the first of its kind in Canada and was just a short drive down the street for me on 97th Street there, in my friend from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's riding. A very, very key component for something that the military desperately needed. They needed to see their government, all levels, stepping up to help. When we're asking people to go into harm's way, there's a cost to that. It doesn't matter whether you're actively serving in the main military or as a reservist; they're still the same. When we're asking these people to do that, we need to be ready to look after them when they return to us, no questions asked.

I know one of the things that I was very, very pleased to be able to speak in support of last year was a project called Homes for Heroes. That is actually getting built right in my very own neighbourhood of Evansdale, and it's tiny, little homes for our veterans that are, unfortunately, homeless. This is going to be an amazing project. I can't wait to see it built. But if it had been just that project now without the Veterans Service Centre, we wouldn't have had those wraparound supports. You know, it's not necessarily enough just to put somebody under a roof; you have to have the services to be able to help them and get them to a point to be able to move forward.

You know, back in 2016 we saw the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs bring forward Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day on June 27, again a key component for us as government to be able to realize that these things are real. They have harmful effects on people, and we need to be able to step up to help them. Again, it's all about wraparounds, so I'm hoping that this current government will continue to provide those things here at the provincial level because those folks deserve it.

4:20

We've heard about the daycare that was involved. I know of at least one military family that were at Glengarry Child Care, which was another \$25-a-day daycare site which is no longer a \$25-a-day daycare site because this government removed it. So I start to wonder: well, you're taking these things away; how is that supporting our military families, our reservist families who count on these types of services? You know, just like, I think, a lot of physicians, I've always heard it said that anybody who does get involved within the Canadian military, within reservists are not doing it for the money. They're doing it because they want to serve, so we need to step up and serve them back as well. Taking away things like the \$25-a-day does not do that.

I know that there were changes creating specific government websites, both in English and French, specifically for military families. Again, as government levels we have to step up.

Again, I must say that, you know, in my travels over the course of my six years that I've served in Edmonton-Decore as their MLA, reservists that I've talked to haven't necessarily brought forward . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I'd take this quick opportunity to just remind all members to ensure that they're using the acceptable beverage containers.

I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has risen to join debate.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my sincere privilege to stand and speak to this legislation that honours our great military reservists, and I'm very glad to see that the opposition is mostly supporting this motion even though their federal counterparts seem to want to totally defund the Canadian military. Here in Alberta there are over 2,300 reservists between the army, the air force, and the naval reserve units.

These men and women operate out of or report to bases all across Alberta such as the 20th Field Battery, the royal Canadian artillery, the Canadian army reserve unit located in Lethbridge. The battery is one of the two field artillery units in the 41st Canadian Brigade Group. This reserve force regiment originated in Lethbridge in November 1992, when the 18th Air Defence Regiment, royal Canadian artillery, was authorized to be formed. However, they have a deeper history, with connections dating back to the first and second world wars.

In the First World War the 25th Battery, which was authorized on the 7th of November, 1914, as the 20th Field Battery, CFA, CEF, embarked for Britain in June of 1915. It also disembarked in France in early 1916, where it provided field artillery support as part of the 5th Brigade, CFA, CEF in France and Flanders until the end of the war. The battery was then disbanded on the 23rd of October, 1920.

During the Second World War the 20th Field Battery mobilized the 20th Field Battery, RCA CASF in September 1939. It was redesignated the 20th Anti-Tank Battery, RCA, CASF on the 1st of December 1939. It provided antitank support as part of the 2nd Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA, CASF, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division in northwest Europe until the end of the war. The overseas battery was disbanded on the 22nd of September, 1945.

Since their assistance in the world wars the 20th Independent Field Battery in Lethbridge underwent several redesignations in 1947, in 1964, in 1970, in 1992, and in 2011. Since its redesignation as a reserve force regiment in 1992 soldiers of the 20th Independent Field Battery have served part-time, typically serving one or more evenings a week and/or during the weekend.

One side point I'd like to make about the 20th Independent Field Battery royal Canadian artillery, Canadian Army reserve unit in Lethbridge is its involvement in communities across the province. An example that comes to mind is that during ceremonies the artillery firing here at the Legislature: one of the guns that is used is shipped from our base.

One individual who is highly involved with community outreach for the military and the base in Lethbridge is Warrant Officer Glenn Miller. Glenn served 25 years in the royal Canadian artillery, from 1982 to 2007. His career started in the 3rd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery in Shilo, Manitoba on the 40-millimetre Bofors anti-aircraft gun system and the blowpipe very-low-level surface-to-air missile system. During the Cold War he served in the 128th Airfield Defence Battery at the Canadian Forces Base in Baden-Söllingen, West Germany. Shortly thereafter the 4th Air Defence Regiment was formed, and he trained as a detachment commander on both the mark 1 and the mark 2 Skyguard radars, providing protection for the airfield. From 1991 to 1995 he was a recruiter for the Canadian Armed Forces in Toronto. In 1995 he first came to Lethbridge and served in the 18th Air Defence Regiment as part of the regular force to provide training for the militia unit. He has instructed on various leadership courses and the Javelin detachment and Skyguard radar detachment commander courses at the artillery school. After retiring he completed a communication arts program, majoring in advertising and public relations, at the Lethbridge College in 2009.

Mr. Miller has been an active volunteer in the community and in many not-for-profit organizations and service clubs. He has also served as service officer assisting veterans and their families for over a decade with the General Stewart Branch No. 4, Royal Canadian Legion. He remains committed to working with many organizations and schools across southern Alberta, promoting remembrance activities, and most recently advocated for funding to have a bronze casting made of horses and our famous artillery unit to memorialize this honoured history.

Many reservists, like him, volunteer to deploy on domestic and international operations such as provincial emergencies or in international conflicts when positions are available. When they are not reporting for duty or volunteering at home or abroad, the majority of reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in post-secondary studies.

Working with our reservists and even our veterans to ensure that they have the supports they need for everyday life is critical. These brave men and women have put their lives on hold in emergency situations or their lives on the line to actually serve overseas. These sacrifices are something we do not take lightly, and ensuring that there are supports for reservists and veterans who choose to attend postsecondary is the least we can do, in my opinion; supports like the Alex Decoteau scholarship, which provides \$5,000 to military members and their families so they can pursue a postsecondary education after service. We also launched the veteran-friendly campus pilot program at the University of Alberta through a \$714,000 grant. This amazing program will help develop academic, social, and mental health supports for veterans pursuing a postsecondary education as part of their transition back to civilian life. The veteran-friendly campuses program is a great step in helping support our veterans, and with its success I hope to see similar programs adopted at the Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge.

If passed, the date chosen for the reservists' recognition day will fall on the same day as reservists' open house, the last Saturday of September. Putting these two days together provides a unique opportunity for people to visit reserves closest to them and learn about what happens at the reserve facilities and what they can do to get involved. This date was established through thorough consultation and contributions by individuals like General (Retired) Paul Wynnyk and Colonel Vernon, the commander of the 41st Canadian Brigade Group.

Mr. Speaker, 97 per cent of Canadians live 45 minutes away from one of the 122 reserve units across 117 communities in Canada. These facilities are integral parts of our communities, and they bring in so many people. Giving due recognition to reservists is about paying respect to those who have put their lives on the line and be on the front lines assisting our communities at the first sign of an emergency. Acknowledging the service and the sacrifices of our military reservists, whether they are deployed internationally, assisting in local matters, or working through school work or their day job, it is extremely important that we show our appreciation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am in full support of Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act. Legislation like this plays an important role in our communities and goes a long way in uniting Albertans through the importance of our brave men and women in our nation's military.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-North has risen.

4:30

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, proposed by my colleague from Leduc-Beaumont. First, I would like to thank the hon. member for being so passionate about our Armed Forces and his efforts for reservists to be recognized in legislation. I am thankful for the contribution and sacrifices that members of the Armed Forces make to protect our freedom, lives, and livelihoods.

I want to share a bit of background information about the reservists' role. Reservists are primarily a part-time service position who may volunteer for full-time deployment or deployment of operations. Alberta is home to 2,300 reservists between the army, air force, and naval reserve units, who help support our Armed Forces and deserve to be recognized for their efforts and dedication to this province and country. Most reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in postsecondary studies and participate in their sector of the Armed Forces when they can. Reservists support our communities through natural disaster situations such as the Slave Lake and Fort McMurray forest fires and the 2013 Calgary flood. Along with helping with natural disasters, reservists also participate in international operations alongside regular force members in Latvia and Ukraine.

The dedication and passion reservists have to help those who need it is amazing. An article from the *Calgary Herald* covered the story of a reservist from Calgary. Corporal Christina Brine of Calgary flew to Mali in 2019, when it was struck by severe drought, poverty, rebels, and extremists. She took part in Operation Presence, a year-long mission to support the United Nations multidimensional integrated stabilization mission in Mali. The conflict claimed the lives of 191 UN peacekeepers since the operation began in 2013. Brine risked her life to serve a cause that would help thousands. Full of courage and passion to serve her country, her team, and others across the world, she's a hero, and so are others who have made sacrifices to be away from their husbands, wives, children, and friends to serve a worthy cause. Thank you for your service.

Like Brine, many reservists choose to leave their civilian lives to help their regiments in whatever capacity needed. Did you know that reservists participated in the world wars and volunteered to participate in humanitarian causes throughout history?

Mr. Speaker, Calgary is home to the Calgary Highlanders, an army reserve. The Calgary Highlanders is a primary reserve infantry of the Canadian Armed Forces, and they are part of the 41st Canadian Brigade Group in Alberta and are located at Mewata Armory. The regiment is over 100 years old. The Canadian brigade group's service battalion, combat engineer regiment, signal regiment, and the King's Own Calgary Regiment are also located in Calgary.

Reservists are heroes. They have made sacrifices to protect people's freedom across the world. These brave men and women deserve to be honoured in legislation so all Albertans can take part in recognizing the contributions and sacrifices they have made. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be able to honour reservists and members of the Armed Forces for the truly tremendous work they do. The government of Alberta is the largest employer of Reserve Force members because we recognize the strong leadership skills and exceptional contributions they make to our communities. Interestingly, 97 per cent of Canadians live 45 minutes away from one of the 122 reserve units across 117 communities in Canada. Reservists are extremely valued by our communities, and we appreciate their dedication to helping Albertans when needed.

The military liaison has done a tremendous job. Homes for Heroes is a project that provides tiny homes to transition veterans back into civilian life; \$1.1 million was committed to replicating

the Calgary project at ATCO Park, which will be able to provide 20 units to veterans.

Mr. Speaker, reservists' recognition day correlates to reserve open houses, which provide the opportunity for people to visit their facilities and learn about what they do and how people can get involved. The goal of this private member's bill is to increase public awareness of the invaluable contributions that reservists of the Canadian Reserve Force make to the communities of Alberta through their civilian and military roles, recognizing and honouring the important role of the Canadian Reserve Force in protecting the safety and security of Albertans and Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, the last Saturday of September in each year is to be known as reservists' recognition day. I'm honoured to have the chance to speak to this bill and give my thanks to the hard-working men and women who devote their lives to helping others. I support my colleague's private member's Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, as I will join my colleagues in saying that we are absolutely grateful for the service of reservists in the Canadian Armed Forces and happy to recognize their service in any way that we can.

I did have a couple of questions and comments on this piece of legislation, and I hope that the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, if he has the opportunity to rise and answer some questions, would do so. I think it would be helpful for us to have some additional information. We do know that the royal Canadian Armed Forces are recognized on the first Sunday of June. Since reservists are part of the Armed Forces, they are also, and rightly so, recognized on that day. I'm wondering if the member, if he does have an opportunity, would just expand. I think it would be good for all people in this Chamber to understand: why the distinction? Why are we separating out the reservists from the other forces? It's not a criticism at all, Mr. Speaker. It's actually just a question.

I did want to comment on a couple of the things that some of the other members have brought up here today in talking about, I guess, some of the supports that are in place for people who are reservists or who do this work and particularly veterans in general. I think that while we were in government – I think one of my colleagues talked about some of the things specifically that we had done in recognition of the service of those members. We did establish a day to commemorate PTSD. That certainly isn't just in relation to veterans, but there are a number of other investments that we made.

One of the things that someone brought up was service dogs, and I would like to touch on that very quickly because I think it is a support that many people who are veterans who have for whatever reason sustained an injury – whether it's a physical or a psychological injury, there are times when the best treatment for that person is actually a service dog. It is not medication, it is not all of the other therapies, but it actually is a service dog.

4:40

I didn't quite understand the extent of the relationship within a service dog team until I actually met some teams through a really interesting organization that deals only with veterans, whether it's military, whether they're reservists, whether they're members of the RCMP or various city police. They only work with veterans, and they only work with dogs that are PTSD dogs. As you can

imagine, it is quite expensive to breed the dogs and then to train the dogs and then to place the dogs and then do all of the maintenance training. Then, as you know, the career of a service dog doesn't span the length of time that a human career would last. They don't last as long, sadly, so there is always the cost of their replacement – right? – getting your dog ready to retire and then bringing in another one to train.

There's an organization in this part of Alberta. It's called Courageous Companions, and they do work with veterans and, you know, service dogs. There are just some incredible stories. There's one fellow: he was a medic, actually – I think he was a reservist as well – and he talked about some of, obviously, the horrific things that they had seen and that they had had to do. As you can imagine, the psychological injury was significant, and that spread to his work life, to his family life, to everything. He was very successful being paired with a dog that was able to assist in managing the posttraumatic stress. It's hard to even explain. I can't articulate it. It's almost something that you have to see, to watch somebody begin to recall maybe a traumatic scene or a traumatic experience, whatever would trigger that, and then to see the dog work with that human being to calm them down. Of course, it looks very natural and very easy, but this is years of work to get to that place.

The reason I'm telling this long, convoluted story is that it's all about investment. It is one thing to have a day to say: "You know what? Let's recognize the contribution of reservists." Absolutely, let's do that, because I think their contributions are amazing, and they're outstanding, and I'm very grateful for them. But it's one thing to have a day to recognize; it's quite another to put your money where your mouth is. What you see happening: let's talk about this particular budget. When I think about the Community and Social Services budget, that is the one ministry that is responsible for service dogs in Alberta. Now, there is \$300,000 that was made available for granting, for grants to service dog organizations, and that helps with – you can imagine all of the costs of doing that work. I did not hear about any grant funding that went to any of these organizations.

In fact, the organization that received the most in terms of grant funding was actually a private company that just opened a few years ago. I think there's a tie to a failed UCP candidate, but I won't get into that today. This is a private company that charges up to \$45,000 for a dog. Now, these other organizations: there are some that charge nothing. They do fundraising. They match the human to the dog, and they work with that pair, that team.

The reason I'm talking about this, Mr. Speaker, is that I think it is one thing to say, "Let's recognize the importance of this group of people" – absolutely, let's do that; absolutely, we need to do that – but we need to do more than that. We need to support them more than just a day and wearing a ribbon and saying thank you on that one day. We need to support these folks year-round, and that means supporting them with all of the things that they need. For young reservists, that's supporting them through affordable tuition, affordable housing. When they're young families, that's access to affordable, accessible, high-quality child care. That's access to fair wages. That's access to health care, to solid health care. When they finish their career, if for whatever reason there is an injury or there was harm in some way, it's that they have access to the tools that allow them to reintegrate into their lives, whether it's in their community or their family, because we know those injuries can be significant.

Again I keep going back to: it is fabulous to have a recognition day, but, you know, a recognition day or a ribbon on your lapel without significant investment and work isn't really that meaningful. One of the examples I often use – when my kids were little, we used to talk about this, and this was the example that I

would give my daughter. She would get really excited when she found out that it was secretaries day. She was like: “Mom, what are we going to get your secretary? You have to get her something really nice and get her flowers and take her out for lunch.” The conversation that we used to have is that, you know, I think it’s important to recognize the valuable work of administrative professionals – it used to be called secretaries day – but it has to be more than that. It has to be fair wages and fair treatment all year long and then, sure, if you want to do something special on the day, but that doesn’t replace all of the other things that need to happen.

That’s always my go-to day when I want to use an example. I think that for a very long time, for example, we’ve, you know, patted ourselves on the back and said: we’ve got Administrative Professionals Day, also known as secretaries day, so we don’t have to do all of these other things. On this one day we can just talk about how outstanding this profession is, how outstanding these people are, and then we don’t have to address the massive problem with underpayment and all of those other issues. I’m using this example because I think that we can all agree that we all value the contribution of reservists, all of us. There is no disagreement here. We all believe that the contributions are valuable, and we are very thankful for them. However, we have to go further than that.

This particular piece of legislation – I’m going to go back to the bill a little bit – this act obviously recognizes the last Saturday of September to be reservists’ recognition day. That’s great. It aims “to increase the public’s awareness of the invaluable contributions that reservists of the Canadian reserve force make to the communities of Alberta through their civilian and military roles.” That’s great. We’ve had some members here today talk about some recent examples of that. We know that they have certainly helped us out quite a bit here in Alberta. We’ve had a number of natural disasters in the last few years, and they have been there for us when we needed them. They’re not just here in Alberta for us; they’re right across the country.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has risen.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 207, the Reservists’ Recognition Day Act. I want to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont and military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces. I know that he has been working tirelessly in maintaining a strong relationship between Alberta’s government and our Armed Forces.

Over 36,000 Canadians are dedicated to serving in the Armed Forces as reservists. They are an important part of our Armed Forces and can be called upon in times of national emergency or threat. These individuals who serve in our primary reserve are trained to the level of and are interchangeable with their counterparts who are fully commissioned in our Armed Forces. This means that these very individuals may be posted to Canadian Armed Forces regular operations on a casual or ongoing basis.

Bill 207 would recognize the last Saturday of September in each year as reservists’ recognition day. I believe that it is important to honour the sacrifices of former reservists and those being made by those who are active reservists. In addition, their families have made a sacrifice in enabling their loved one to enlist in Canada’s Armed Forces. Since the year 2000 more than 4,000 reservists from the army, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Royal Canadian Air Force have been deployed in international expeditionary operations in Africa, the Middle East, and many other parts of the world.

When COVID-19 hit Canada in an unprecedented way, the federal government called upon reservists to assist. More

specifically, these individuals assisted in long-term care homes across Canada, in addition to ensuring Canadians are kept safe from coast to coast.

4:50

In 2016 Alberta was devastated by the Fort McMurray fires. The Canadian Armed Forces were called in to help, and reservists were sent in to assist with the fires that were ravaging the Fort McMurray community. Many of us can recall images of those fires and it seeming like something out of a movie. Throughout the fires reservists provided aid to those in distress, assisted with the evacuation of residents, and transported equipment and personnel.

On Remembrance Day and other commemorations of the sacrifices of the men and women who serve our great nation, reservists assist and participate in cultural events, parades, festivals, and other public events across both our province and in Canada.

Calgary is home to the 41st Canadian Brigade Group, which is an army reserve formation of the 3rd Canadian Division. These men and women serve part-time while maintaining full-time jobs, studies, and families. They are dedicated to proudly serving Canada when needed to assist our regular forces on deployed missions. Through an order in council, reserve members of the Canadian Forces can be called into active service, meaning that they may participate in missions that commissioned members partake in.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that we recognize the contributions of our reservists, both those who served and those who continue to serve. It is a sincere pleasure to support this important private member’s bill, and I want to once again thank my hon. colleague from Leduc-Beaumont for bringing it forward. Alberta needs to recognize the sacrifices made by those who wish to serve the land of the strong and free.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there members wishing to – I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie has risen to join debate.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s certainly an honour to rise in the Assembly this afternoon and speak on Bill 207, Reservists’ Recognition Day Act, which proposes to recognize the valour and service of Canadian and Albertan military reservists on the last Saturday of September each year. I have personal connections – multiple family members, actually, have served in the reserves in the past and presently here in Alberta – so I’m truly honoured to speak to this bill this afternoon.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is home to our 20 reserve units, including the 41st Canadian Brigade Group of the Canadian Army, 4 Wing Cold Lake, and 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Yes, even the navy can be found here in landlocked Alberta, represented by HMCS *Nonsuch* and HMCS *Tecumseh*. These units are comprised of Albertan women and men who serve in their spare time to keep Canadians safe and to defend our rights and freedoms. These are everyday Albertans – teachers, doctors, lawyers, trades workers, construction workers, moms, dads, sisters, and friends – who sacrifice their free time, time with their loved ones to keep our country free and secure.

Albertan reservists have a proud tradition of valour in combat, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it was an Alberta regiment, the Calgary Highlanders, who deployed more soldiers to Afghanistan than any other Canadian reserve unit. In recognition of this great achievement that unit was awarded the chief of defence staff unit commendation. Alberta’s reservists have participated in every

major conflict since the founding of this country. They were there at Vimy Ridge, when all four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together for the first time and achieved the impossible against insurmountable odds. They were there on the beaches of Normandy, when Canada and her allies fought back against Nazi tyranny and oppression. They were there in Rwanda, Cypress, and Bosnia on peacekeeping missions. They were there in Haiti to deliver humanitarian aid, and they were there in the mountains of Afghanistan to help liberate that country as well.

Mr. Speaker, our brave women and men in uniform not only serve our country overseas but also right here at home. As mentioned by previous speakers, when fires and floods threaten the lives, homes, and communities of Albertans and Canadians, for that matter, our reservists go out. During the 2013 Calgary floods Alberta's reservists were there to help evacuate members of the public and sandbag the shoreline of the Bow River. When wildfires engulfed Fort McMurray just a few years ago and in British Columbia as well as other sections of the Canadian forest, Canadian reservists, very much including our Albertans, were there. Most recently members of Alberta reserve units have been deployed on Operation Laser and Operation Vector, ready to mobilize at a moment's notice to aid in the province's distribution of vaccines in response to COVID-19.

Allow me to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, as I speak to this bill to remember the over 3,500 Albertans and over 60,000 Canadians who have made the ultimate sacrifice and given their lives in service to our country. In particular, we remember the Albertan reservists who were killed in Afghanistan: Raymond Friedrich Arndt, master corporal from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; Nathan Hornburg, corporal, the King's Own Calgary Regiment; as well as countless others who were injured and may still be suffering from their experiences.

These brave men and women have sacrificed so much so that we can live in peace and safety, able to enjoy the many rights and freedoms that they purchased for us at so heavy a cost. The reservists of the Canadian Armed Forces put their lives on hold, spending weeks and even months away from their families and careers so that we can live in one of the greatest, freest, and most prosperous countries and provinces in the world. It's important, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to work together to preserve our freedoms, and I want to thank these loyal men and women who've stepped forward in service as reservists.

There are countries, Mr. Speaker, that even today forbid freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedoms that we as Canadians and Albertans hold so dear and must continue to defend, these rights and freedoms. Our government will always stand up for those in need. We will always fight against tyranny, oppression, and intolerance. Most importantly, we will never cease to thank our men and women in uniform for defending our country, our freedoms, and ultimately our way of life.

Mr. Speaker, let us honour the reservists of the Canadian Armed Forces. Let us designate the last Saturday of September as reservists' recognition day and give the men and women of the Canadian military reserve the recognition they so richly deserve for all that they have done and all that they will continue to do to make Canada and Alberta one of the greatest places to live in the world. I want to thank the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont for his tireless work in representing our government and our caucus in liaising with the military connections here in Alberta. I want to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for his work in bringing this bill forward. I'm honoured to stand in support of it, and I'm pleased to offer and encourage all members of the Assembly to join me in supporting it as well, showing our brave women and men in uniform that we honour and appreciate all that they have done for

us. To the reservists of Canada and Alberta I say thank you. To those past and present I say thank you.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today, as it is always an honour to rise in this House. As I always like to do, of course, we need to acknowledge our health care workers and our essential workers and our front-line workers and, of course, teachers, who I know are doing incredible work right now in a very challenging time. Since I am speaking about Bill 207, I'd like to acknowledge those folks who are working in the military, in the Armed Forces, at home and abroad. I don't get a chance to speak much about this topic, and I'm very happy to do so.

You know, before I talk about that and the content of Bill 207, I must also, like my colleagues in the House earlier have shared, share my deep concern that we've not had an opportunity to talk about private members' bills that nongovernment MLAs have brought forward. It's quite rich for the government members to talk about how proud they are and how supportive they've been of this process when they've not allowed us to move our bills forward. I think that a lot of those military folks would have partners and spouses with pensions, as an example, and would love to talk about . . .

5:00

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but the time is now 5 o'clock, and the time allotted for the debate of this particular item has concluded.

Motions Other than Government Motions

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.

[Debate adjourned March 22: Member Irwin speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has seven minutes remaining should she choose to use them.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion 517, and I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague the Member for Edmonton-South for bringing forward this very important motion. For those who are watching, the motion is to urge the Legislative Assembly and the government to denounce the display and use of all symbols of hate and racism, which I think, unfortunately, is incredibly timely right now in Alberta and across the world. Certainly, in Alberta we have seen the rise of a number of cases of racism, overt racism, but we're also dealing with issues of systemic racism. Banning these symbols and making a clear statement from the Legislature that we denounce these hate symbols is very important.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'd like to share a bit of a personal story. Unfortunately, I'm sure there are a number of members in this

Assembly who can also share personal stories of racism that they've experienced. For me, that incident took place – there have been many in my life, but the one that sticks out the most is that when I was 13 years old, my family home was vandalized. To this day we don't know who did it. My family home was vandalized by being egged but also by being spray-painted. The words "Paki house" were spray-painted on my home. If it's shocking to hear those words in this Assembly, I have to say that it's shocking for me to say those words in this Assembly, but unfortunately that is a word that I have become far too familiar with. It's one that has been levelled against me many times personally, but also you can imagine the shock as a child to come home and to see your family home defaced that way, with those words on it.

That experience – and I apologize for getting a little bit emotional, Mr. Speaker, because it is something that I still carry to this day. When I say "carry to this day," what I mean is that any person who's experienced such overt racism understands the shame that comes with it, because when you are shamed with racism like that, it becomes something that you internalize. It becomes something that keeps you silent. It's something that makes you feel like an outsider in your own community and in your own neighbourhood and amongst people that you thought you trusted and that you thought knew you and cared about you. So it is something that I still struggle with, as a representative even. Whenever I see overt acts of racism in this province, I still have to overcome my initial feeling of: stay quiet, stay silent, and bury the shame. But, of course, I think it's so important in my role as an elected official to speak up constantly on these issues.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, about that event that happened to me is that another thing was done to my house. Swastikas were spray-painted on my home. This is a good example of a racist symbol and what we all know that it means. As many might know, the origins of the swastika are actually not about hate. They actually come from the Sanskrit language about well-being, but it was co-opted by the Nazis to become a symbol of hate. It is a good example of how everyday symbols can become symbols of hate.

We know that a rope is just a rope unless it's tied in a noose and hung from a tree or pinned to the door of a hospital to send a clear message. We know that a sheet is just a sheet unless it's made into a hood and put over somebody's head, and then it's meant to instill fear. The same is true, Mr. Speaker, when we think about things like tiki torches. I know it is something that has become – some people will dismiss it and say: "Tiki torches? Come on. They're just things that we keep out on our patio. They're silly. They're not symbols of hate." But we know that they are.

We know that there is a long history of everyday objects being co-opted for hateful purposes, and the tiki torch is one of them. We know that if we look back, there are many historical examples about how torches have been used to instill hate and fear in people. The Ku Klux Klan used them. Nazi Germany: they used torches. Of course, we all know of the very recent examples of Charlottesville, Virginia, where we know that those organizers all carried torches, and the impact and the message that they were trying to send were very clear. It was to send a message of hate and fear and racism.

We saw in Alberta, right in our own province, not too long ago, earlier this year, that organizers of I believe they called it a Walk for Freedom march in Edmonton used the symbol of torches on their materials that they sent out to people to encourage them to come to the Legislature to march. Under the guise of anti lockdown or COVID measure demonstrations there's actually an underlying clear message of hate and fear and racism, and that is why they use those symbols.

This is what's so important, Mr. Speaker. What's important is that the symbols that we're talking about here, things like nooses,

things like swastikas, things like torches – for racialized people, we know what it means. All of us know what it means. In fact, all the people who organized that event: they were sending a clear message because they know that it means. Those events were held in the middle of the day. There was no need for lighting of any kind. Those torches were being asked to be brought and to be carried to send a message of hate, and we cannot ignore in this province that it was done in the context of recent and numerous attacks on black Muslim women in Edmonton and in Calgary.

In that context – because we cannot ignore context – the use of these racist symbols is meant to strike fear in the hearts of Albertans. It's meant to strike fear in the hearts of racialized Albertans, not just fear but silence, because I can tell you that there is absolutely a message to stay quiet. I felt that. I felt that as a child. I still feel it. Every time I speak out on issues of race on social media, I get attacked that way, too. My first instinct is to think, "Maybe I should stop doing that," because it's hard. It's difficult to face that much hate every day. Mr. Speaker, what's so important and what's so important about this motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-South is that we cannot remain silent.

When I think about that experience that I had, Mr. Speaker, as a child, when my family's home was attacked and was vandalized, what I took away from that experience, what I remembered from that experience was all the neighbours who came out the next day and expressed their solidarity with us. Neighbours, some of whom we'd never met before, showed up at our house with paint cans to help paint our garage door and to help paint our fence and to say to us that they don't agree with what was done, that they do stand with us, that they do see us as part of their community and part of their neighbourhood, and that is the message that I also take away.

What this motion is asking us to do as a Legislative Assembly, as leaders in this province, is to say to all Albertans, "You are our neighbours," to say to those racialized individuals who see those symbols and know that it's meant to strike fear in their hearts: "You are one of us. We will stand up for you, just as we will all stand up for each other." The hope, Mr. Speaker, is that that is the message that they take away.

I hope that when Albertans see this message – and this is just the first step. This is a motion urging us to take, quite honestly, the smallest of steps, Mr. Speaker, to simply denounce the use of these racist, hateful symbols and to acknowledge them for what they are, to send a message to those who will try to dismiss them as simply household goods and that "it's not intended for that," who will try to equivocate or explain it away, that: "No. We see it. We know what it is, and we will not accept it. We will not accept fear being struck into the hearts of our neighbours and of racialized people in this province."

This is the first step, but it is the hope, Mr. Speaker, that it is the first step of many, because we have so much work to do in this province to be truly antiracist, and the least we can do as Albertans is to stand up with our neighbours and say: "You are one of us. We love you. You are safe. You are welcome."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to support Motion 517, proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton South. Racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination have no place in Alberta. This province was built and continues to be built by people from different backgrounds. As a Muslim who emigrated from Pakistan to Canada at a very young age, I can personally speak to discriminatory instances that I have experienced. Like many

visible minorities, I have been a victim of racism, but I have also been welcomed and treated fairly by most. Racism, no matter the extent, is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

5:10

I remember during my school days sitting in a classroom trying hard to figure out the content being taught while also trying to learn English. People stared at me, and I constantly struggled with the feeling that I was not like my peers. The combination of those factors made it a difficult environment for me to be in. I eventually settled in and made a few friends, learned English, and succeeded in my studies, but it was a difficult transition.

As the first parliamentary secretary of immigration it is my honour and duty to speak to this very important issue. Living in Canada for the majority of my life has taught me that there are so many unique and diverse people here, and all of them deserve our respect. Here I have achieved everything that I have, which includes my education, my family, my friends, employment, and being a member of this historic and honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is growing and becoming more diverse. In Alberta 1 in 5 people are immigrants, almost 1 in 4 identify as visible minorities, and almost 300,000 are indigenous people. For Alberta to reach its full potential, Albertans cannot be held back because of racist attitudes, lack of understanding, and fear of change. Denying any acts of racism would be a terrible mistake.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2020 the hon. Premier spoke to Motion 24, which dealt with the provincial response to racism, and he said:

There is an element in this discourse that says, “We don’t have racism” and that basically seeks to deny it. I think that is a terrible mistake. It is a terrible mistake to deny the lived reality and the real experience of our friends, our neighbours, our co-workers, so many of whom can speak to the reality of racism, both explicit and implicit, in their lives.

The recent hate-motivated incidents that took place on December 9, 15, 18, and February 3 in Edmonton and on March 22 in Calgary continue to remind us that racism exists. On December 9 two women wearing their religious head covering, otherwise known as hijab, were attacked outside of Edmonton’s Southgate shopping centre. A man approached them and yelled racial obscenities and assaulted one of them. On December 18 a black man was walking down the street near his home when another man began yelling racial slurs, leading to the man running away. He was then followed by the intruder into his backyard and was assaulted. On February 3 two separate racially motivated attacks took place, again in Edmonton, where two Muslim women were targeted based on their faith, race, and ethnicity. Unfortunately, more recently in Calgary, on March 22, a woman was approached and was assaulted.

I could not imagine walking on a pathway with my friend and having a person push me to the ground, punch me in the face and stomach, tear off a piece of my clothing that I was wearing as a religious symbol, and having racial slurs yelled at me. Wearing various head coverings is a way for individuals to express their individuality and faith.

I am disgusted and truly appalled that these attacks are continuing to occur in our province. My heart goes out to all the victims of violence, discrimination, racism, and hatred. I am very concerned about the recent attacks that have taken place in Alberta and strongly and fiercely condemn them. I want my fellow Albertans to know that I stand with them, that I’m here to support them, and that I will continue to fight against discrimination in this province.

Combating racism requires a group effort. Through active listening and sharing our experiences, we will be able to build the bridges and relationships needed to fight against prejudice and

tackle racism and hatred in this province. Our institutions, Mr. Speaker, must reflect our diversity and demographics based on merit. I am proud to stand here, in our most prestigious building, along with my colleagues on both sides of this House. Partisans have no place in the debate on racism. We are all Albertans, and we all come from different backgrounds, have different skin colours and various religious beliefs. Acts of racism, religious intolerance, hatred, and discrimination, no matter the extent, require immediate action.

A couple of weeks ago, on March 27, I participated in a rally called stop Asian hate. I stood in solidarity with Calgarians and with my provincial colleagues and Member of Parliament. This was a demonstration of Albertans coming together and standing up to acts of hatred, discrimination, and violence. Standing up and condemning hatred, discrimination, and racism requires every single one of us to come together as a collective and stand up for each other.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to, I think, an important motion, which looks at banning symbols of hatred in our province. Now, we’ve had a lot of discussion over the last year and a bit about the impacts of racism in the province of Alberta. We have seen it clearly. We have heard, I think, probably more clearly than ever from racialized communities across this province about the real impacts of overt and systemic racism on their lives.

I think back to the debate we had here on a government motion back in June and the Premier’s comments at that time, where he spoke about racism being an issue of the heart and that being something that can’t be legislated away. I was interested to find a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. which spoke to that point. He said:

Well, it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behaviour can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that is pretty important also. So while the law may not change the hearts of men, it does change the habits of men if it is vigorously enforced, and through changes in habits pretty soon attitudinal changes will take place, and even the heart may be changed in the process.

Wise words from a man who gave his life in the pursuit of civil rights and justice and to fight racism.

There may be some that look at this suggestion and raise the concern about freedom of speech or Charter rights, and I recognize that those do indeed come into play. Those are things which have to be balanced and considered. But I think we also have to consider what the impact of those decisions is on the individuals and on racialized communities in determining where we want to draw that line. I think it is reasonable that we take symbols that are known symbols of hatred and racism and that we mark them as such and remove them from the common use in public spaces.

5:20

I think back to what the experiences are of racialized communities over time. Let’s be clear, Mr. Speaker. This is long-standing experience. The trauma of the Confederate flag is not a casual one. This is not a one-off thing. This is not something that people take lightly. This is generations of trauma of black communities in the southern United States. That is what that flag symbolizes. That is what it means for racialized communities, and that is what they are exposed to every time they are forced to see it. We need to consider that impact.

So many communities have endured this for generations – the Jewish community, the Muslim community, so many others – persecution and oppression. The irony is not lost on me that so many of those that are promulgating hatred against these groups and indeed utilizing many of the symbols we're discussing today themselves are doing so because they say that they are persecuted and oppressed. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Those individuals, those groups do not know what those words mean.

I think it's important that we as legislators work to tip the balance in our society. As Dr. King said, we can regulate behaviour, we can choose what is and is not allowed, and that may not change the heart, but it does change the balance in our society. We set a line about what we say is acceptable, and that changes the experience for these racialized communities who have for generations been shut out, whose experiences, whose views, whose words have been othered, have been considered less important than those of others. We have an opportunity with this motion and, hopefully, with government action, should it pass, to send a message to racialized communities in Alberta that we have their back, that there is a level for what we consider acceptable in society. We have an opportunity to tilt that balance and make this a safer place for them to live and to send the message to those who want to harbour their hatred in their hearts and express it in public and, unfortunately, often continue on to direct action that we do not consider that acceptable.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I had the opportunity to speak here for the ceremony for Black History Month – and thank you again for hosting that this year – I noted that this last year, with the COVID-19 pandemic, was a year when many of us experienced what it is to live a life restricted, to live in a world where we were surrounded by a constant, invisible but deadly threat, one that has the ability to impact our ability to make a living, our freedom of movement, indeed the very lives and health of ourselves and our loved ones. It's not a pleasant experience. It has been a difficult year for many, and we recognize the real impacts that it's had. But let's be clear that that is the reality of what racialized communities have lived with for generations, and living in that kind of fear, living with that daily oppression, with that daily feeling that you do not fit in your community or that others have the freedom to express that hatred outwardly in your community and to foment more hatred against you, wears a body down.

We are seeing now that racialized communities in the province of Alberta are facing an increase in that burden. We've made progress. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have come a good ways. But we have seen even recently that there's still a lot of work to do. That's why it's so important that we have actual antiracism principles in our curriculum, why we teach real, authentic history when we have individuals who, ironically, are protesting their personal rights and freedoms and concerned about the seizure of property from a church, who are going to a First Nations reserve and speaking with disrespect to the chief and clearly have no awareness of actual treaty rights and their rights to their property. It is clear that we've got more education to do and a balance that we need to work to tip.

So I appreciate my colleague from Edmonton-South bringing forward this motion. This is a small gesture we can make, and I am pleased to hear that government members that I've heard so far are all in support, because certainly we have gone to extraordinary lengths to express our support for a wide number of groups under this government and taken some unprecedented action through legislation and other pieces to express some of that support.

Here is an opportunity to take a small and, I think, reasonable step to show that same level of support for racialized communities in the province of Alberta, a very real and concrete step to demonstrate the commitment to root out racism and hatred, to ensure that our streets and communities are safe and that we recognize the

real experience and trauma that these groups have had and continue to have and build the kind of empathy that indeed I hope to see in our curriculum, in every aspect of how we approach and develop policy in this province, to recognize the real and continuing work that needs to be done. I look forward to voting in favour of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? Oh, my apologies. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. You have approximately six minutes prior to closure of debate.

Ms Phillips: Well, that's an embarrassment of riches. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak in favour of this motion, and I thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-South for bringing it forward. What this motion can do is signify government action and clarity of interpretation for the black, indigenous, and people of colour who live in this province. In particular, I am thinking of the indigenous constituents of Lethbridge-West, who oftentimes – and I see it, and I hear about it, and I know that it exists, the absolutely appalling racism that oftentimes greets indigenous people in southern Alberta as they are simply trying to get an education, find employment, find a place to live, and often find themselves having to change their last names to do so, for example.

Now, what this motion can do is signal that the Legislature has spoken with respect to interpretation of motivation, that the use of symbols is not just symbols, that they, in fact, are a signal to various groups that online life is not just online, that it's real, and that they are an incitement to certain kinds of activity – they are activities that are unlawful, that are prohibited by hate speech provisions and, of course, obviously, various other elements of the Criminal Code – when we are employing cues that then create a permission structure for certain kinds of behaviours that are, in fact, unlawful. That is what this Legislature is doing when we pass this motion: we are indicating that in this province the use of those cues is, in fact, something that will be interpreted as part of a racist and potential commission of a hate crime, should it go that far.

Now, a motion is simply an expression of the Legislature's will. It is an important exercise to undertake. Just as racist symbols are symbols, our words are also symbols. They cause great effect, and they can cause change. It is better to have legal changes, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre talked about, so that the kinds of things that happen that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talked about do not happen anymore, because ultimately we need legal sanction for these types of actions. But our words do carry weight, our actions such as appropriately funding an antiracism council, appropriately establishing and resourcing a hate crimes investigation unit, ensuring that we have specific grants for legal reform, Police Act reform, and other Human Rights Commission tools to actually ensure that our words are given practical effect in public policy. Now that is much better.

5:30

I look forward to the government ensuring that the words that we express in the Legislature today are backed by some of these very specific, substantive legal and public policy reform proposals that we have put forward, that indeed have been begun in this province and whose progression have not been seamless. Certainly, the government can improve some of their approaches to these matters. I encourage them to do so, and I would be happy to work with them to do so, particularly as it concerns new Canadians in southern Alberta, as it concerns indigenous people in southern Alberta.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will talk a little bit about what we know is happening out there with respect to whipping up of online hate and conspiracy. That's where, you know, the inspiration for, for

example, these tiki torches came from in the first place. This stuff is real. It has a real effect. It is not just angrily typing some words into a phone. It is, in fact, the comments and it is these statements that pollute the Commonwealth and that undermine our ability to actually make progress as a country both socially and economically, to truly have inclusion and prosperity, not just in words that we are here to talk about today.

In that, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to reflect on what we have seen over the last few days with respect to the kind of permission structure that some of these online forums and others create for a channelling of various types of hate groups regardless of what the public policy issue is. Today, you know, it's public health measures. Yesterday it was yellow vests. They are all funnelling an ideology that we must speak out against and ensure we have the right public policy tools to do so.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, unfortunately. Standing Order 8(3) allows five minutes for the hon. Member for Edmonton-South to close debate.

However, before calling upon him to do so, I believe he has a question for the Assembly.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly for the remainder of the afternoon to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South to close debate. You have five minutes.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and close debate on Motion 517, which calls on the Legislative Assembly and government of Alberta to denounce the use of racist and hate speech and racist symbols in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard from many members on both sides of this House how these symbols are so dangerous and how these symbols are meant to intimidate and instill fear in people across this province. This is not a hypothetical, right? We heard personal stories from many of my colleagues here today, including my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud here, and I think everybody here was moved by them. We know that in just the last few weeks we've seen people such as in Calgary, where there was a woman beaten and her hijab torn from her head, and we've seen in Edmonton multiple people who have been attacked in hate-motivated attacks.

Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. These demonstrations and these attacks that are happening in the last few weeks are not isolated incidents, and they are spurred on because of the use of this racist imagery. To be very clear, we're not talking about the tiki torches being used to get rid of mosquitoes in the backyard. What we're talking about is when people walk down the streets in broad daylight using torches as a hate symbol against Albertans and against their neighbours. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about marches that have nothing to do with COVID-19. They have nothing to do with our freedoms. Instead, they have everything to do with spreading hate and fear.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that this motion calls on the government, and I'm hoping that this motion will actually encourage the government to do what we've been calling for along with the National Council of Canadian Muslims in light of all these attacks and in light of these stories and actually bring forward a bipartisan committee so that we can have a fulsome debate on how we can implement legislation and policies that will reduce these instances and will fight back against this racism. The reality is that this motion, as you know, is not binding. This motion by itself will not

cause that change. What is required is that this government work with the opposition, work with Albertans, and work with groups such as the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the NCCM, to go out and actually take force against these racists.

Our society, we know, needs to be welcoming and inclusive, right? We know that we need to be working together against these instances of hate, and we know that throughout the COVID pandemic we've seen the instances of anti-Asian hate in particular on the rise. Mr. Speaker, when members of the government and members of the opposition, indeed both, get up and speak out against these racist incidents, when they get up and they speak about how these might be condemned, condemnation is not enough. Condemnation alone is not enough.

Indeed, we saw the minister of culture and multiculturalism speak and condemn this a couple of weeks ago when we were debating this previously, but, Mr. Speaker, we're asking for more. We're hoping that this motion spurs this government to do more and actually start the bipartisan committee and start bringing policies and start bringing in legislation because it is not enough that we stand in this place and debate these issues. These issues are not hypothetical. They're not something that we can just say: "We've condemned it. We've accepted this motion. Let's move on." Instead, what we need to actually talk about and we need to actually do is implement real policies and real legislation.

We can look at other jurisdictions, right? We know that British Columbia is currently looking at legislation to implement to ban the use of racist symbols across their province. We know that other jurisdictions such as the United States and Portland are currently looking at legislation to ban racist symbols and hate symbols in their jurisdictions as well. We know that this work is being done across North America as we see this rise of racism, as we see this rise of hate and this rise of anti-Asian hate.

Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, we should not pat ourselves on our backs for the work we are doing today. We should not pat ourselves on our backs because we passed this motion today – hopefully, the Assembly passes this motion today – indeed, we need to say that this is the first step. This is something that says that we have begun the work. Together, hopefully in a bipartisan or a multipartisan manner here in Alberta, we can move forward and continue to help support racialized people across this province, right? We know that racialized people have systemic barriers put against them every single day. We know that racialized people, in some cases, are afraid right now to even go to their grocery stores or go outside.

Mr. Speaker, that simply cannot stand in this province. We cannot allow this hate to continue in this province. Indeed, I look forward to working with the government in the future to ensure that these hate symbols are banned.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 517 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:39 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Issik	Renaud
Allard	Long	Savage
Amery	Lovely	Shepherd
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Neudorf	Sigurdson, L.
Copping	Nicolaides	Sigurdson, R.J.
Dang	Nielsen	Smith

Dreeshen	Nixon, Jeremy	Toor
Ellis	Pancholi	van Dijken
Fir	Phillips	Yaseen
Irwin		
Totals:	For – 28	Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 517 carried unanimously]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:43 p.m.]

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