



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 19, 2021

Day 99

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UC)  
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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UC),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
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Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC),  
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
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Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
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Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 62

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 1

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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Eggen  
Gray  
Issik  
Jones  
Phillips  
Singh  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Glasgo  
Gotfried  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sabir  
Smith

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Ceci  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Smith  
Sweet  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Guthrie

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

### **Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights**

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

Ganley  
Glasgo  
Goodridge  
Hanson  
Milliken  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Sweet

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Ganley  
Getson  
Guthrie  
Issik  
Loewen  
Singh  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 19, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing as we pay tribute to a former member of this Assembly who recently passed away.

**Mr. Robert Maskell**  
May 27, 1940, to April 14, 2021

**The Speaker:** Robert (Bob) Maskell served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark from 2001 to 2004. Mr. Maskell graduated with a bachelor of education from the University of Alberta and began teaching in 1969. Over more than 30 years as an educator he was a teacher and principal at Jasper Place composite high school, then principal at the Victoria school of performing and visual arts. In 1996 he received the city of Edmonton's citation award for long and significant service to the community and to the arts in Edmonton. Passionate about education and lifelong learning, Mr. Maskell was also a dedicated community volunteer. Robert (Bob) Maskell passed away on April 14, 2021, at the age of 80. In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Maskell, each as you may have known him.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now have the playing of the Canadian national anthem.

### 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-Fish Creek.

#### AstraZeneca Vaccine for COVID-19

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Vaccines are saving lives. This is not just news; this is fact. People across the globe have witnessed the positive impact of vaccines, and our government is working diligently to make them widely available to Albertans. Beginning tomorrow, Tuesday, April 20, Alberta Health Services and hundreds of participating pharmacies will begin booking

appointments for AstraZeneca vaccination for Albertans born in 1981 or earlier. Walk-in vaccinations will also be available at specified clinics in Edmonton and Calgary and at identified pharmacies across the province. As COVID case rise is a broad concern across the province, lowering age eligibility for AstraZeneca vaccine opens up more opportunities for Albertans who choose to get vaccinated while reducing not just the impact of case count on our hospitals but, as importantly, the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the more people that choose to get vaccinated, the greater the protection of our communities and health care system. Increased levels of vaccination are part and parcel of our ongoing commitment to protecting lives and livelihoods.

Mr. Speaker, we have recently seen examples of misinformation and exaggeration on social media regarding the safety of AstraZeneca vaccine. Alberta's decision to reduce the age eligibility to 40 is based on public health recommendations, weighing the protective benefit of the vaccine against some negligible risk of adverse outcomes. The AstraZeneca vaccine has been shown to reduce infection by 60 to 70 per cent and reduce severe outcomes, including hospitalization, by 80 per cent. To quote the chief medical officer of health: I know some Albertans have concerns about recent cases of blood clots; this is understandable, and it is also important to remember that these cases are extremely rare.

Let me reiterate that Alberta's government is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on protecting lives and livelihoods, with targeted measures to bend the curve and protect Albertans and our health care system. Mr. Speaker, I cannot encourage eligible Albertans enough, particularly those 40 and older, to strongly consider signing up now to get their very own life-saving jab as soon as possible.

#### Premier's Remarks on COVID-19

**Mr. Dang:** Why are you saying these things when you don't know? That's not me asking, Mr. Speaker, but, rather, Athabasca's Mayor Colleen Powell. The Premier twice told Albertans about a deadly birthday party that happened in Athabasca and used that to offset blame for failing to keep students safe at Edwin Parr school, which has more than 100 confirmed COVID-19 cases. The Premier claimed the birthday party had a, quote, 100 per cent attack rate of COVID-19. But Alberta Health has since informed media that no such superspreader event ever occurred. That's right. The Premier made it up.

We are in a global health crisis unlike anything we've ever seen. We need real and effective leadership, not the weak offering we're getting from the Premier. He's failed to support schools, small businesses, essential workers, you name it. In fact, it gets worse, as he continued to fight with doctors during the first and second waves of COVID-19, and he still has plans to fire 11,000 front-line workers when this pandemic is all over and done.

What's more, the Premier can't even be honest with Albertans. He's repeatedly downplayed the dangers of COVID-19 at every opportunity. He told this House that Alberta's homeless population is safe from COVID because they have a "high level of immune resistance." They don't. He tried to tell the people of Alberta last week that COVID was little more than the flu. I direct members of this House to the *Hansard* of May 27 to read this Premier say: "an influenza of this nature," "an influenzalike flu," "an influenza that does not generally threaten life."

Yes, he said all those things. The Premier even claimed that COVID doesn't affect young people. Of course, we know it does, and they can get it from their schools, as we've seen in Athabasca. This pandemic has taken over 2,000 lives. Nearly 200,000 people have been infected, and we need real leadership, not the Premier

dreaming up imaginary parties to once again divert blame for his massive failure to manage this pandemic and save lives.

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

### COVID-19 Community Response

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Disney animated film *Hercules* Hades, the god of the underworld, has Pain and Panic as his demon henchmen. In the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by the late Douglas Adams, the cover of the guide has the words "Don't Panic" written in bold text. All of our evacuation drills have told us to say calm and do not panic as we make our way to safety.

A dog, when fearful of a situation, may exhibit aggressive behaviours as part of its survival instinct. It may even lash out and bite, driven by fear. Other animals will stampede when they become fearful and panic. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump leaves little to the imagination on how that worked out for the buffalo.

You see, fear and panic, when unchecked or – heaven forbid – fed, cause people to do bad things. Fear drives our fight-or-flight instincts, that have been embedded into our psyche for generations. I've personally seen the best of people and the worst of people over the last year when dealing with COVID. Driving in Edmonton most recently, I saw a person walking down the sidewalk wearing a grinding shield, safety glasses, double masked, with not a person to be seen for blocks around, while she was carrying a six pack of sodas.

In the local Onoway grocery store I saw a video of a middle-aged man verbally abusing a teenage boy, threatening him, smashing the food basket out of his hands because the boy wasn't wearing a mask. The boy recently, a couple of days before that, had had his nose broken. He couldn't wear a mask.

These types of incidents and behaviours are not isolated, and they're driven by fear. It's our job as leaders to assure people that fear and panic are not necessary, to offer people assurance that the worst is nearly over, that this pandemic, too, will come to an end. By breakup the worst will be over and in our rear-view mirror. By the summertime we'll be back to as close to normal as we've seen in a long time, Mr. Speaker, so make plans for the summer such as outdoor activities with your family or other local activities. Of course, we should be cautious, but we do not need to be consumed by fear and panic, as many of the social media outlets and some other political figures may promote. Keep calm, carry on, and be strong. We're really close to the finish line.

### 1:40 Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

**Ms Pancholi:** Less than three weeks ago the Premier made his first public comments on the draft curriculum. He declared that there was widespread and overwhelming support among Albertans. Well, Mr. Speaker, the actual grades are in, and Albertans aren't supportive. In fact, most are giving the Premier a big, red F. Parents believe that what's being proposed does little, if anything, to prepare their kids for the future and the future economy. They believe that the content isn't age appropriate and in some cases is downright bizarre. To pass grade 2, this Premier believes kids must be able to draw a sketch of barter exchange in the silk trade with China, yet we see very little in the way of Canadian history. What's being proposed certainly doesn't meet the calls to action set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Premier's terrible grades are also coming in from people who actually grade the homework: 90 per cent of teachers say that they are not comfortable teaching this curriculum, and 95 per cent of principals say that they would be uncomfortable supporting it. If

that's what the Premier calls overwhelming support, I'd like to hear his definition of underwhelming support.

Alberta's school boards are also weighing in, and again the results are not good. In just the last five days Aspen View public schools, Clearview school division, Foothills school division, Greater St. Albert Catholic schools, Holy Spirit Catholic, Parkland public schools, Red Deer public schools, and all of Alberta's francophone school boards have refused to pilot this curriculum, and that was just in the five days, including a weekend. It comes on top of rejections by the Calgary board of education, the Calgary Catholic school district, Edmonton public schools, and many more. Right now more than half of Alberta's students are represented by a school board that is refusing to back this curriculum, and the list keeps growing.

It's clear that this Premier does not have overwhelming and widespread support for this curriculum. If he thinks he still does, perhaps it's time that he goes back to school to learn what those words actually mean.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Livingstone-Macleod is next.

### Southern Alberta Wildfires

**Mr. Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March 28 was a devastating day as wildfires roared throughout southern Alberta. Dry conditions and severe winds exceeding 120 kilometres an hour caused these fires to quickly spread and burn thousands of hectares of farmland. Areas around Claresholm and Stavely were the hardest hit in my constituency. Residents on the Blood reserve and in the town of Carmangay, both in the constituency of Cardston-Siksika, were also evacuated. The historic hotel in Carmangay was burned down just the night before.

My heart goes out to everyone affected by this dangerous event. In the Claresholm area there was substantial damage to farms. Four homes were destroyed, and the families are temporarily displaced. For the families affected that didn't lose their homes, many of them had their land damaged. They lost miles of fences, their barns, their grain bins, and farm equipment only weeks before seeding was set to begin. There are fears that soil quality in many places may have been harmed, and now erosion is occurring because of the fire, the dry conditions, and the severe winds. This could impact the harvest of many farmers in my constituency this year, especially if the weather stays dry for the foreseeable future.

However, the damage could have been a lot worse if it wasn't for the fantastic work of our first responders, our volunteer firefighters, and just our neighbours. I would like to personally give my thanks to the MD of Willow Creek and the Claresholm fire departments, the RCMP, and other first responders that quickly came to our aid from Foothills county, the county of Vulcan, the county of Lethbridge, Alberta Forestry, and Alberta Health Services. I would also like to give a big thank you to the Hutterite colonies in the area for their quick response and assistance as they provided water trucks and other equipment. There are countless stories of neighbours getting into their tractors and selflessly assisting farms that were in the path of the fire by creating fire barriers, protecting their neighbours' homes and other buildings.

Mr. Speaker, communities in rural Alberta stick together during the tough times, and I saw that first-hand during these recent wildfires. This is what Albertans do.

### Albertans' Communication with MLAs

**Member Irwin:** I stand here today from a position of privilege. I don't know what it's like to have to go to work every day in an

overcrowded hospital, a hard job at the best of times but unimaginable in the midst of a pandemic. I don't know what it's like to be a single mom trying to choose between going back to work or staying home to be with her kids, who have just been sent home for online learning. I don't know what it's like to be teaching in a pandemic, facing a government that denigrates your profession regularly and refuses to acknowledge you as essential front-line workers.

I don't know what it's like for so many of you, for so many Albertans. I cannot possibly imagine what you're going through, but I can listen, and I can empathize, and I can fight as hard as I can so that your voice is heard here in this Legislature. We are elected here for this very reason, and I take the stories that people share with me, that they entrust with me very seriously.

That's why it kills me when I hear the disdain with which this government addresses the very people we represent, how this Premier will dismiss anyone who disagrees with him as radicals, socialists, special interests, and more. Yes, special interests: that's how we characterize parents wanting their kids' schools to be safe. Disgusting. And for a government that gave away billions to its already wealthy, special insider friends, that's awfully rich. When will this government realize that all the people they call special interests are really just, in fact, Albertans?

Look, we spend a lot of time talking to Albertans, listening to Albertans, and let me tell you that these special interests are telling us that they want hope, they want a positive vision, and they want a government that respects them and is focused on moving our province forward, but they're getting none of that. While this Premier may mock you and his government dismiss you, I promise you that we won't. We'll keep fighting for you, your family, your community, and all the special interests that matter most.

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

### Recycling of Agricultural Plastics

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta ag plastic recycling program is a three-year pilot project that helps farmers recycle used grain bags and twine. The program has been a collaborative effort, led by over 20 organizations as part of the multistakeholder agricultural plastic recycling group, or APRG, financially administered by the Alberta Beef Producers and operated by Cleanfarms. There are 31 collection sites currently across the province. In the pilot's first 15 months, over 1,000 tonnes of grain bags and twine have been collected for recycling, diverting this material from landfill disposal or burning. The pilot fostered the start of a new grain bag recycling facility in Bashaw, Polyag Recycling, creating local jobs processing plastic back into feedstock pellets for remanufacturing. APRG members are advocating for responsible management of agricultural plastics and the permanent implementation of the program.

Saskatchewan has had a grain bag program for three years. Manitoba is moving towards a program. Saskatchewan's approach has increased the cost of a grain bag by 5 to 7 per cent but has provided a reliable recycling market and shifted the burden of managing plastics away from municipalities.

APRG continues to work with Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta agriculture on a permanent solution while asking for implementation of an extended producer responsibility program for ag plastics. Municipalities have made similar requests for an EPR program that would shift the cost and management from municipalities and taxpayers to those directly producing and consuming products. To address this, Alberta Environment and Parks has opened a public engagement on implementing an EPR system in our province. An EPR approach to plastics will support the creation

of a circular plastics economy, making Alberta an industry reprocessing leader in Canada.

I support the APRG and the province as they work together on this important endeavour.

### Registry Services

**Mr. Carson:** Mr. Speaker, the UCP needs to come clean on their plan to sell land, personal property, and corporate registries. They have not been clear and transparent at all, and I fear this process is being rushed as the UCP caves to lobbyists while trying to make a quick buck to pay for their fiscal mismanagement. Has the UCP considered what Albertans think of this plan? Are the stakeholders involved freely able to disagree? Are concerns being listened to, or is this simply a done deal just waiting to be signed?

I fear that the sale of registries will drastically decrease the quality of services while increasing costs, and I worry that some communities will lose these services completely. The UCP has also been silent about the 130 Albertans working in these offices that fear for their jobs. These workers deserve answers. To make matters worse, the UCP is offering a 35-year exclusive contract for these vital registry services. Registries are one of the few things in government that generates revenue. In fact, they provide about \$124 million in revenue per year.

This begs the question of what the UCP's true intent is with selling off these offices. Do they think that these services will be cheaper if they're done by a private industry? Are there concerns or corners that can be cut? Or is the government hoping that these fees increase drastically to help put more money in the pockets of UCP insiders? We've already seen in other provinces that privatizing these services leads to increased costs for residents while quality goes down.

**1:50**

The UCP clearly does not care about the pocketbooks of Albertans. They have already allowed insurance premiums and utility rates to skyrocket and have brought in additional fees for camping and 911 services. [interjection] I cannot make sense of why a government would want to do this, but unfortunately, time and time again the UCP have proven that the interests of Albertans are not their primary focus. They would rather listen to insider lobbyists than concerned Albertans, who do not want to see their government sold to the highest bidder.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members will be aware of the long-standing tradition that allows members to make members' statements uninterrupted.

### Oral Question Period

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

### COVID-19 Case Projections and Health Care Planning

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is in the grips of a third wave, and they need to be able to trust their Premier. But let's look back at the second wave. New documents show that AHS developed early warning triggers when cases started to rise in the fall. These triggers were defined as the point at which, even if public health orders were introduced that day, the ICU would still be overwhelmed. The worst-case scenario trigger was 500 cases a day, which Alberta reached on October 30, but the Premier went missing, doing nothing for weeks. Why did the Premier ignore his own triggers for more than a month, putting Albertans at risk?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we did no such thing. We were very clear after the release of six-month modelling back in April of last year, which proved to be spectacularly wrong, like it has in every jurisdiction, that there was no public utility in developing and releasing long-term models but that we had developed an early warning system, basically 14 days out. We've been transparent about what those numbers are in the current, third spike of COVID-19, which is why we implore Albertans to carefully follow the public health guidelines so that we can flatten the curve and get to the protection that we need through the vaccines.

**Ms Notley:** Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that's not quite true. These documents are very clear. They say that once we hit a daily case count of more than 500, the health care system is overwhelmed. We reached that on October 30. Instead of taking action, the Premier sat on his hands, refusing to do what was necessary for another six weeks. This decision to knowingly push the health system capacity hurt tens of thousands of Albertans, especially the at least 15,000 Albertans who had their surgeries cancelled. Will this Premier apologize to these Albertans?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, as is her habit, is just completely fabricating false information. Never have we suggested that 500 daily cases . . .

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** . . . will overwhelm the health care system, Mr. Speaker. We, in fact, have a health care system with 8,300 beds, but we have the capacity in our acute-care system to manage at least 1,800 COVID patients and at least 425 in ICU. We don't want to move ourselves into a situation where that's necessary, which is why we call on Albertans to follow the public health measures.

**Ms Notley:** The trigger was 500 cases per day as per the AHS recommendations.

Now, by the time the Premier took action – he ignored these recommendations – daily case numbers were more than 1,700, the military was prepping to deploy reservists, hospitals were double-bunking COVID patients, they were using unconventional ICUs because the conventional ones were full, they were rationing oxygen, and the province was working on field hospitals, all of this avoidable. He got advice, he ignored it, and Albertans suffered as a result. Why won't the Premier take responsibility for this failure?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's another day and more fear and smear and falsehoods from the NDP. We've never run out of oxygen, were never close to doing so. It's true that Alberta was hit by a fall spike, like most jurisdictions across the northern hemisphere. It's also true that our per capita level of COVID-related fatalities is below the national average; it's about one-quarter of that in the United States and about one-third of that in Europe. That's thanks to the diligence of Albertans, and we invite them to continue to be diligent in the weeks ahead.

**The Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 1:52 by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Premier's Remarks on COVID-19

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising that a Premier incapable of taking responsibility is also incapable of sharing the facts. These documents also show that although leadership was discouraging the development of modelling, public officials

persevered. Documents from September 29 show that they were preparing to brief the Premier on modelling, yet on October 20 he told this House: "No, we do not have updated models." Mr. Speaker, I have *Hansard* in one hand; I have AHS documents in the other. They do not match. Through you, to the Premier, doesn't it sound to him like he misled this House?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, we were very clear in the fall that we continued to have 14-day projections based not on assumptions and modelling but actual hard numbers. Now, I know that throughout all of this the NDP has tried to drive fear and hysteria; it's the way they do business. They love six-month models based on abstract assumptions, which have proven in every place around the world to be spectacularly wrong, undermining public confidence in COVID policy. We've stuck to short-term projections because they're accurate and help us to plan for what's coming to us.

**Ms Notley:** They existed. The Premier told this House they did not and he hid them. This entire thing calls into question his ability to tell the truth when asked. We saw a perfect example of this last week. When asked by media about an alarming outbreak in an Athabasca school, the Premier tried to blame it on a child's birthday party in which there was a, quote: hundred per cent attack rate. Except, Mr. Speaker, no one in Athabasca knows what he's talking about and neither does AHS. Why does this Premier struggle so hard to say things that are true?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, that was information I was briefed on by senior public health officials. Is the Leader of the Opposition calling into question their competency and veracity? I hope not. We have continued to protect lives and livelihoods, but unlike the NDP, we treat public health restrictions as a last and limited resort because they have their own damage on health, including mental and emotional health. That's why Alberta has been trying to take a balanced approach to protect our health care system: minimize deaths but also minimize the impact on society of public health restrictions.

**Ms Notley:** To be clear, I'm calling into question this Premier's honesty. He often exaggerates or says things in public that are later contradicted by other people or by documentation. Whether it's the Venezuelan business owner who never approached him and never cried, whether it's the deficit number he got wrong, whether it's whether he called COVID the flu, he is losing public trust every day in an emergency when trust matters the most. The only antidote is to release Dr. Hinshaw's recommendations and release the modelling he claims doesn't exist but documents show does. Why won't he do that?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, there is no modelling. There are short-term projections, about which we are very transparent. I've never said that this was the flu. I invite the member opposite to read the Public Health Act, which refers to the current crisis as an influenza pandemic. That's the formal legal expression. We will be modifying that, of course, in amendments to the Public Health Act that are currently before the Assembly. What Albertans don't want is the kind of hysterical fear being driven daily by the NDP.

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

#### COVID-19 Case Projections and Health Care Planning (continued)

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition just gave the Premier multiple opportunities to come



clean with Albertans and tell the truth. I wish he had taken even one. We have AHS documents that show that this Premier had access to modelling or forecasts or whatever he wants to call them. He had set early warning triggers, and all through the second wave he deliberately chose not to release them, and he deliberately chose not to act. Albertans should be furious. To the Premier. We're in a third wave today. Will this Premier make a different choice and share these models with Albertans? Yes or no?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, there are no models to share. There are short-term projections. I was very explicit – in fact, I included slides at two of my recent news conferences which incorporate those projections, that are not based on abstract assumptions but on real, hard numbers. That's why I said that we expect to hit an average of daily new cases of 2,000 by the end of this month. We are concerned that we could hit a total active case count of 20,000 by the end of this month, which is why we brought in additional public health measures, which we implore Albertans to follow.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, the documents are clear. There is modelling. What there isn't is full honesty from this Premier. Now, Alberta reported more than 1,500 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This third wave is now approaching the height of the second wave, where we were in December, when this Premier failed Albertans. There are nearly 18,000 active cases today. More dangerous and highly transmissible variant cases continue to surge. They're now the dominant strains of virus in Alberta, over half of all our active cases. Albertans deserve to know where this is headed. Where are the models, and why does this Premier refuse to be honest with Albertans?

2:00

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's the NDP that's refusing to be honest. The documents to which they are referring actually confirm that there were no long-term models that the government had in the fall. They were short-term projections, about which we were transparent and about which we are currently transparent. [interjection] I would point out to the leader of the NDP that that's not even heckling. That's just, like, immature mumbling. I invite her to rise to the decorum of this place and to the civility that Albertans expect in this place.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, immature mumbling is what we've seen from this Premier throughout this pandemic.

All provinces across Canada are struggling with the third wave. I'll admit that. Because of rising cases, Ontario now has the heaviest restrictions in Canada. They're reporting more than 4,400 new cases per day. Their positivity rate is back up over 10 per cent. The rate of transmission is outpacing the rate of vaccination. It's devastating. But, Mr. Speaker, last week Ontario managed to release modelling to their citizens. Today Alberta has more cases per capita, so why does this Premier refuse to do the same? Why can't he follow Doug Ford's lead and tell Albertans where this is going?

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, apparently, the Health critic for the opposition doesn't even bother to watch our briefings and our news conferences, so I'll share this with him in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. The percentage of total active cases which are resulting in hospitalization in recent weeks ranges between 5 and 6 per cent. That means on 20,000 active cases, which we expect to hit by the end of this month. That would imply approximately 1,000 to 1,100 people in hospital, which is deeply concerning; 1.2 per cent of total active cases, roughly, are resulting in ICU admissions. That, too, is very troubling, which is why we implore Albertans to follow the public health guidelines. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

### Government Members' Remarks on COVID-19

**Ms Hoffman:** This Premier's continued defence of his anti public health caucus is disturbing and devastating to many communities dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks. Thirteen of the 17 MLAs who signed a letter disavowing public health orders have outbreaks in schools in their constituencies. There are currently more active cases involving schoolchildren than there were at the height of the second or first waves of this pandemic. Will the Premier now admit that these MLAs would rather play politics with public health orders than take care of their constituents?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it's regrettable but predictable that the NDP continues to misrepresent the position of those MLAs, which was not to disavow public health orders but to disagree with the policy. The NDP votes against all sorts of common-sense laws. That doesn't mean that they incite people to violate those laws. This government has acted to protect human life and our public health care system and will continue to do so as necessary.

**Ms Hoffman:** Calgary public and Catholic moved nearly 80,000 students online last Wednesday. Fort McMurray public and Catholic and some schools in Elk Island have also been forced to follow suit. Despite all of this, the COVID-19 denying caucus in the UCP is still pushing this Premier for fewer measures in the variant-driven third wave, and we have a Premier making up a child's birthday party to shed his own responsibility.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** Will the Premier, the current Premier, tell students, staff, and families who feel abandoned by their UCP MLAs why he refuses to kick them out of caucus?

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:03.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the event in Athabasca, I was simply repeating information upon which I was briefed. I have to assume – and the opposition should as well – that our senior public health officers speak accurately about these things.

With respect to the schools, of course, we've always said that if the capacity of the schools to operate is impaired, the Minister of Education will take the necessary action in consultation with relevant school boards, but I would point out that all of the schools would have been shut since last year, since last spring, permanently, if the NDP was in office. Thank goodness they couldn't do that.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier should know that's just not true. We spent months preparing recommendations, and 10 months ago we released them to this Premier, calling on him to make schools safer. That's what would have happened if there was an NDP government, but this government thought it was hilarious. Actually, earlier, late last week, when he was on the brink of sending 80,000 students home, he blamed us for fearmongering. Premier: why won't you do anything to make schools safer instead of blaming kids and defending the COVID-denying flank within your own caucus?

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, disagreeing with the particular stringency of a set of policies is not denying the reality or the danger of COVID.

**Mr. McIver:** Point of order.

**Mr. Kenney:** With respect to schools, Mr. Speaker, of course the NDP wanted to shut them down. Their phony plan was to build

2,000 additional schools in the course of a month and hire and certify thousands of teachers. What a pathetic and transparent joke. We know that governments of the left across the world, because of their special-interest friends, shut down in-class instruction everywhere, in North America and in Europe. It was wrong for the kids, especially those in disadvantaged homes.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:05.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain has a question.

#### **AstraZeneca Vaccine for COVID-19**

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night we heard the excellent news that Health Canada has approved the AstraZeneca vaccine for Canadians 40 and older. After receiving this news, the Alberta government got to work, getting our vaccine booking system updated to accommodate appointments for all Albertans over 40, allowing the province to get even more jabs into arms. However, some antivaccine propagandists and media figures have mused that the AstraZeneca vaccine is unsafe. To the Minister of Health: can you please tell us if this information is accurate?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Dr. Hinshaw and other MOHs across Canada have said, the AstraZeneca vaccine is a good choice for people who are at risk of a severe outcome as a result of COVID-19. While the adverse reaction reported on Saturday is unfortunate, it doesn't change the risk assessment for Albertans. I was happy to hear that the patient was treated and is now recovering at home. It's important for us to remember that this blood clot disorder is extremely rare globally, I think with only one case in 100,000 to 250,000 vaccines. In contrast, those over 55 have a 1 in 200 chance of dying.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that nearly 600,000 more Albertans will be able to get their shot because Albertans who are 40 and older now have the opportunity to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine and given that the more people that get vaccinated as quickly as possible, the sooner we can protect our communities, reduce the burden on our health care system, and get life back to normal in our province, to the same minister: can you please elaborate on how effective the AstraZeneca vaccine is?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The AstraZeneca vaccine has been shown to reduce infection by 60 to 70 per cent and severe outcomes like hospitalization by 80 per cent, so for anyone infected with COVID-19, they're much more likely to experience – sorry. About 1 in 4 people hospitalized with COVID get blood clots, and there have been two cases of blood clots out of more than 700,000 doses administered across Canada. Health Canada issued a safety review last week: no specific risk factors identified with AstraZeneca. We continue to strongly recommend that everyone get the vaccine so that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. Turton:** Thank you, Minister, for your informative answer. Given that I plan on getting my vaccine sometime in the near future and given that I've heard from the minister that he has booked his as well and given that some may have concerns about the vaccines

that have been approved through Health Canada, to the minister: what would you tell Albertans that are still hesitant about receiving any of the approved COVID-19 vaccines?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like them to consider the unvarnished facts provided by Dr. Hinshaw and to think about their loved ones. I'll be getting my shot this week, and I hope that others in this House who are eligible will book their appointment as soon as possible. I'm getting my shot not just for myself but for my family and for those around me who are vulnerable. If we want to protect lives and livelihoods and get local businesses up and running again, vaccines are a no-brainer. Vaccines are safe. Vaccines are effective. We all need Albertans who are eligible to sign up now so that we can put the pandemic behind us.

#### **COVID-19 and Child Care**

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, the number of child care programs with active outbreaks is increasing. Across Alberta 19 programs are on outbreak status. In Calgary there are currently eight centres with active outbreaks, up from two a month ago. One of those centres alone has 25 cases. We need to be taking every measure we can to keep kids and staff safe in child care centres and support the operators and parents, who depend on programs staying open. That's why last week I called on this government to provide direct supports now to the child care sector. Rapid testing is being offered in schools. Will the minister commit today to provide rapid testing to child care programs?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a strong track record of protecting child care centres from COVID-19 and limiting the spread to staff and children. Thanks to the efforts of child care operators, since last spring there have been about 2,500 programs open, providing care to about 54,000 children, with fewer than 70 reported outbreaks to date. We recognize that early childhood educators, daycare workers, and many other occupations would benefit from receiving the vaccine, and we want to offer that to them as soon as possible. That's what we're working hard to do. With the limited amount of vaccine available, we're focusing on the most at risk of severe outcomes . . .

2:10

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that the question was about rapid testing and given that the outbreaks go well beyond Calgary, with five or more cases of COVID reported in child care programs in Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Fort McMurray, and given that one mother returning from maternity leave had only been back at work one day before her child was sent home and that parents across this province are being forced to choose between working and the safety of their children, to the minister: what is she specifically doing to help parents forced to keep their children at home due to COVID outbreaks or close contacts in child care programs? Please be specific, Minister. Parents are listening.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of staff and children has and will continue to be a priority for this government, and on behalf of the Minister of Children's Services I would like to again thank all the child care operators, educators, and staff for doing an incredible job during this pandemic. Since the onset of COVID-19 we've provided child care operators with over \$110

million for pandemic relief costs such as cleaning supplies and PPE. As the pandemic and needs of operators shift, so will our decisions, to make sure kids and staff remain safe during this time.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, given that we're in the third wave and that they need supports now, not thanks, and given that closures of rooms due to COVID and reduced enrolment are resulting in child care operators losing much-needed revenue and given that those losses soar when entire child care programs are shut down due to outbreaks and given that educators and staff do not currently qualify for wage top-ups when they're sick, quarantining, or doing nondirect child care work like cleaning, will the minister listen to what the sector is asking for and guarantee there will be money set aside from the COVID contingency fund to help cover fixed costs and staff wage top-ups for child care programs during the third wave? We need the child care sector to be strong once the pandemic is over. Our economic recovery depends on it.

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic we've made sure that child care programs have the resources to deal with the challenges that COVID has presented. On top of \$110 million invested for pandemic relief, the provincial government invests over \$400 million a year to support working parents and the sector. That included the critical worker benefit, that over 11,800 early child educators received. There are also other supports in place like the Canada recovery benefit. That provides \$500 per week for workers who stopped working or have had their income reduced by at least 50 per cent due to COVID.

### Housing Policies

**Ms Sigurdson:** Last Friday at the AUMA spring caucus the mayor of Edmonton, Don Iveson, repeated his request for \$6 million from the province to serve the most vulnerable in the city. This funding is essential and crucial as it can leverage greater support from the federal government, yet the UCP continues to ignore this call. To the minister of social services: why is the government dithering and leaving the most vulnerable behind? The city has a modest request. Why doesn't this government care enough to fulfill it?

**Mr. Glubish:** Mr. Speaker, we recognize that permanent supportive housing plays a critical role in helping people with complex needs to access permanent housing solutions, and that is why Budget 2021 maintains funding for existing homeless supports throughout Community and Social Services. This includes almost \$28.8 million for Homeward Trust Edmonton to provide a variety of supports, including permanent supportive housing, intensive case management, and rapid rehousing and outreach supports.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the mayor rightfully articulated that funding for supportive housing will save costs in Health and Justice and also said that he was at a bit of a loss as to why the UCP are ignoring calls to fund supportive housing and given that the UCP gives \$30 million a year to a failed war room, I hope all members agree that during these difficult economic times the most vulnerable should be protected. Will the Minister of Seniors and Housing commit today to providing \$6 million to fund the supportive housing initiative?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Pon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We understand how important it is working with the three levels of government, particularly partnerships with the federal government and municipalities, and we'll continue to do that. In terms of the capital that is supporting

the matched funding operating costs for those projects for Edmonton, this government – I'm aware of that. Edmonton indeed addresses homelessness and an increasing demand for affordable housing. However, in the capital plan 2021 we allocate \$77 million in Edmonton.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Given that the UCP's long-term plan does not include building affordable housing – we see this from the low targets for new builds in the UCP's review on housing, which states they no longer want to be an owner of housing – and given that this review indicates the UCP are planning to sell public housing, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: can you confirm that you are planning to sell public housing to the private sector, and if yes, how will you ensure Albertans have the housing that they need?

**Ms Pon:** Mr. Speaker, this does puzzle me. I don't understand why the opposite member continues to say that we will privatize or things like that. Let me make it clear. We are working in partnership with all the nonprofit organizations and the private sector to build a stronger community for Albertans. We will continue to do that. After accepting 19 recommendations from the affordable housing panel, we're working with strategy and addressing the demand from Albertans.

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

### Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education is receiving criticism from the ATA executive, who in my six years of office have demonstrated time and time again to be a partisan group, as is being currently demonstrated during the minister's curriculum consultations. The biggest complaints I get are that the curriculum is not age appropriate to the students and, by my estimation, not enough activism and social justice is being taught in social studies. To the Minister of Education: do these complaints have any merit?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The new social studies curriculum will move to focus on people in relation to each other and the world. In an age-appropriate way students will learn about history, geography, civics, and economics to ensure that they have a rich and well-rounded knowledge about the events, peoples, developments, and ideas that have shaped Alberta, Canada, and the world. By studying connections between people, places, and environments, students develop understanding and appreciation for different viewpoints and for different experiences.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the ATA executive expressed concerns about age-appropriate material and concepts, yet it is given that the concept of discovery math has contributed greatly to the generation of Albertans who do not understand math proficiently, as is reflected in Alberta's international rankings. Will this government's proposed math curriculum get Alberta back to the top and ensure our children will learn arithmetic, or will the next generation of Albertans continue to demonstrate numerical illiteracy if the ATA executive have their way?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the recent trends in mathematics and science studies, TIMSS, assessment our grade 4 students dropped from 16th place to 39th place in the world in

math. This decline in performance is unacceptable, and our students deserve better. After years of declining student academic performance in math the new curriculum will renew the importance of teaching foundational knowledge across all subjects to better prepare our students for success. By learning to think fluently about numbers, equations, and others, students will gain the essential knowledge for everyday tasks.

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, it is given that financial literacy is so important, as epitomized by our federal Liberal government, who have undemocratically spent like typical socialists, who continue to demonstrate that they don't understand basic finance. Is there any hope for Albertans to learn and better understand money, budgeting, and fiscal responsibility in order to better prepare them for life ahead with this curriculum, or will Alberta take the advice of the ATA executive, who state that this curriculum will not serve Albertans well?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for this important question. As a parent and a grandparent I know how important it is for our children to have the knowledge and the skills that they need to succeed in this world. That is why, for the first time, students in kindergarten to grade 6 will be learning about financial literacy. Having even a basic understanding of what money is and how it works will help better serve our students for the future. These are important lessons that can be taught and learned from a young age, and we owe it to our students to give them a comprehensive understanding of real-world problems and, more importantly, give them the tools to face them.

#### School Closures and Home Education

**Member Irwin:** Starting today, more than 90,000 Alberta students in Calgary, Fort McMurray, and Sherwood Park have been forced to learn from home yet again. We know that the school shutdown could have been avoided with proper planning and actual funding from this government. We also know that this shutdown will impact women disproportionately as they are more likely to be the ones that have to stay home with their kids. To the minister, be specific: how is this government actually helping parents with the chaos created by your government's failure to keep schools safe?

2:20

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the important question. The safety and security of our students and our staff has always, always, always and will always be our number one priority. The fact that we have 99.6 per cent of students and staff in schools today learning in a healthy, safe environment is a credit to the work that was done to ensure that we have a solid plan.

**Member Irwin:** Given that rather than taking action to support student learning from home, the Premier has taken to insulting concerned teachers and parents, deeming them a special interest, and we're being accused of standing up for those special interests – yes, Premier; guilty as charged – which is pretty rich coming from a Premier who has given in to special-interest pressure from car insurance lobbyists, corporate CEOs, the list goes on, to the Premier: why do those wealthy special-interest groups get a seat at your table while parents and teachers get nothing but a whole lot of disrespect?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I don't even know what to respond to that because I do not see any validity to anything that

was just said. In fact, we have been working diligently with parents, with education partners, with all of our education community to ensure that students and staff remain safe. In fact, the decisions to go to online learning were done because there was a chronic substitute teacher shortage as well as a number of students that were needing to quarantine. Again, our students and our staff are safe in our schools.

**Member Irwin:** Given that we've got a plan to address those very issues and we've called for the introduction of a \$73 million learn-from-home fund to help families in chaos and given that we made that call before the onset of this massive third wave, so the funding need is likely even greater now, with whole school boards shutting down, including two of the three largest in the province, yet this Premier continues to insult and mock those who are telling the truth about his failed school re-entry plan – check *Hansard*; those are his words – to the Premier: please explain to Alberta families why you continue to demean them for asking for help to teach their kids in unimaginable circumstances.

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, again I would like to remind the member opposite that 99.6 per cent of students and staff are in schools right now, and COVID is not affecting their learning. That being said, the fact that we have had to go to online on occasion for some school divisions, at their request because they were experiencing operational shortages and staffing issues, of course, is part of our plan. We have always been receptive and responsive to the needs of the community, the needs of the educational community, and to the needs of parents.

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

#### Anti-Racism Advisory Council Report

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first members of the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council submitted their final report and recommendations to the government on January 10. We know this because we received a copy. Since then the members on the council have been replaced and the government has sat on its hands, seemingly refusing to make the recommendations public because they came from NDP appointees. To the Premier: why don't you release the recommendations from the council so the public can assess them? Fighting racism should not be a partisan matter.

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to thank the members of the antiracism advisory panel for their recommendations. Government is looking at those recommendations, and I know that the fantastic Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women is carefully reviewing those recommendations. I believe that she is in the process of taking steps, you know, to implement those recommendations.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that Alberta's NDP has been engaging over the course of several weekends on antiracism policies, legislation, and other measures that could be implemented here in the province and given that this work has only been made more important by the recent violent attacks on Muslim women and the torch rallies held both in Edmonton and Calgary and given that the attendees have told us that much of the feedback they are giving was also given to the antiracism council before, to the Premier: can you tell us when you will release those recommendations? Everyone is waiting.

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have on numerous occasions condemned acts of racism, discrimination in our province, and I don't think that that should be a subject of debate. All of us agree that under no circumstances should anyone that calls our province home be discriminated against. I am confident in the work that this government is doing to address the root causes of hate and racism and discrimination, and in the weeks and months to come, we will be doing more to assure Albertans that this is their home.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the minister ducks and dodges the question because he has no good reason for hiding a seriously important report on fighting racism, I'm going to give the Premier one more chance to answer, and I want the Premier to know I'm going to post this video later today. A simple question: when will the first report from the Anti-Racism Advisory Council be released? Give the people of this province a specific date, and stop hiding that report.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member and the Official Opposition deputy House leader will know that the use of a preamble after question 4 is certainly not allowed, and that's a very good example of one.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, this government has done more than the NDP government did during their time. The hon. Justice minister has put into place anticarding, something that, when the NDP was in government, they knew they should've done. They ignored it for four years, and now they have the moxie to walk in here and throw the word "racism" around like it doesn't matter, cheapening the word. Racism is something that we all should avoid, that we all should condemn, and on this side we all do. I believe on that side they do, but unlike that side we don't cheapen the word by throwing it around loosely in here. Racism is something that this Legislature needs to condemn together. Get onboard with us. We're all against it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant Program

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 has impacted our small and medium-sized businesses tremendously over the past year, with many businesses being shuttered or having to lay off employees. This is why our province has provided unprecedented levels of support for our local businesses in the form of the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant. While this support has been helpful, more support is needed, and it is being delivered. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: how does the government anticipate the expansion of the SMERG grant will impact our local businesses?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the question. The small and medium enterprise relaunch grant is designed to help small businesses get through to the other side of this pandemic. It's in addition to numerous federal supports that are there for rent support, wage supports. This money goes to businesses. We've expanded it by up to another \$10,000 – so that's up to \$30,000 of support all in – for small businesses to use as they see fit to help them get through to the other side of this pandemic. A big thank you to all those small businesses out there that have helped all of us stay healthy throughout this pandemic.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that between June 2020 and March 31, 2021, more than 97,000 businesses requested over \$600 million in funding and given that this money has undoubtedly served as a life preserver in these challenging times and further given that many businesses will want to know how to apply and who will qualify, to the same minister: can the minister inform this House who will qualify for the third phase of the grant and how to apply for this assistance?

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

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that question. To be eligible for this, your revenue would have had to drop by 30 per cent due to a health order that's been put in place. Again, to apply for the relaunch grant, just google three words, Alberta Biz Connect, and that'll take you to the online portal. It's going to open up this week for the next round of applications, so stay tuned. We'll make sure we provide notice for when it goes live. We're anticipating that this week is when that's going to happen. We're expecting that over 50,000 small businesses across Alberta will qualify for this. We encourage them to participate in this program, and we thank them again for everything that they've done.

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

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. This is really exciting news. Given that while this grant is extremely helpful and has helped keep our small and medium-sized businesses afloat during the pandemic and given that the future for many is still uncertain and further given that the end of the pandemic appears to be in sight, to the same minister: does the government anticipate that this will be the final wave of the SMERG grant, considering that the vaccine may allow us to open our businesses in a more permanent fashion in the near future?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Again, we're going to continue to be there to support small businesses throughout this pandemic. We're hopeful that with vaccines here now, with a steady supply coming into Canada, we'll be able to put this behind us by the summer months. Again, we have to encourage every Albertan: take that vaccine when it's eligible for you. For everybody that's there that is eligible now for the AstraZeneca vaccine, we encourage you to go out there and get that vaccine. It went through all the rigour and the process. That's how we get this behind us, that's how we get reopened as a society, and that's how we get our small businesses back on their feet.

2:30

### Support for Charities

**Ms Goehring:** Charitable organizations are struggling right now. One of the main sources for revenue for many charities are regular fundraising events. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, charities have been unable to put on such events, and therefore they are losing significant amounts of revenue and are struggling greatly. Will the UCP government provide new supports for charitable organizations as they are getting no event revenues? If so, when will they provide these supports, and can the minister please be specific for a change?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member actually makes a legitimate point here. It's well known that charities and other organizations are having trouble fund raising. Of course, some have been pretty creative, by doing it online and other ways, but there's no doubt that they are having issues. We will stay in touch with those organizations, as we have already, and if there are things that we think that we need to do further, we will certainly consider it seriously. Our charities actually do an amazing job for Albertans, and we do take their needs seriously.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that in 2018 almost 20,000 charitable organizations raised \$347 million through gaming, 70 per cent of which was from casinos, and given that during the pandemic charities in Edmonton are losing an average of \$39,000 per year, those in Calgary are losing \$42,000, and those in Fort McMurray are losing \$32,000 per year – and these problems are being faced in every other community, too – and given that these organizations were created to help people but can't do that without revenue, why has the minister sat on her hands for a full year during a global health crisis and left our charities to suffer and in some cases shut down?

**Mr. Schweitzer:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with organizations across Alberta to make sure that they have supports needed to get through this pandemic. We know it hasn't been easy. We've asked a lot of community organizations across this province. We thank them for everything that they've done. Again, depending on how the organization is set up, the relaunch grant may be available for many of these organizations as well as for not-for-profit organizations for up to \$10,000 in this most recent round. We encourage people to participate in these organizations. Again, it depends on how they're set up. The Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women also has other programs as well as federal programs to help organizations.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that an online survey showed that 1 in every 5 charitable organizations has closed their doors due to the immense struggle during this pandemic and given that every single member has likely heard from charities in their own constituencies struggling to make ends meet and given that this government can find money to fund its bogus war room, which does nothing to help Albertans and only serves to embarrass our province, and given that charities actually do help Albertans, will the minister immediately take forward a proposal to cabinet to shut down the energy war room and put that money towards struggling Alberta charities?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that not-for-profit organizations around our province have stepped up to help us deal with this pandemic. I also know that the Minister of Finance is working very closely with the AGLC to make sure that, you know, organizations across our province are able to access the level of revenue and funding that they need to continue to provide the excellent services that they provide to our communities. I am hopeful and I'm optimistic that the Minister of Finance, working with the AGLC, will be able to get that particular job done.

### Highway 55 Capital Plan

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, highway 55 runs 263 kilometres in northern Alberta, connecting Cold Lake, Lac La Biche, Athabasca, and the oil sands area. The highway is crumbling and desperately in need of repairs. It's a major arterial route for locals and industry in the Athabasca region. Despite this, the Minister of Transportation told

locals that repairs would not happen until 2022. To the Minister of Transportation: can you commit to making repairs on this desperately in need of repair highway 55 sooner than 2022? Albertans who rely on that route cannot wait another year or more.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. Mr. Speaker, the member kind of got it sort of right. I think the construction is going to take place next year. It's in the three-year budget. But until then I'm pretty sure that what I told the member at AUMA is that in the meantime we will fix what is broken. Every spring – it's not unusual – all across the province Mother Nature provides us with all kinds of surprises in the form of potholes and frost heaves, and we have a program to deal with that every single year instead of this year, so the hon. member can tell the municipality that we'll be doing that.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these are not your regular, run-of-the-mill potholes and given that 55 serves as a vital transportation route for Alberta's oil and gas industry and given that countless heavy tankers and semitrucks traverse this route on a daily basis and given that it includes the transportation of hazardous, poisonous, and even radioactive materials to dumping sites and given that a collision involving one of these vehicles would be catastrophic and given that I will be tabling later today pictures of vehicle parts that have fallen off these vehicles coming along this route, including semitrailer tires, to the Minister of Transportation: what concrete measures will you take to do something this year on 55?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that highway 55 is important – it's very important – but unlike the member, I don't have the luxury to pick one highway; they're all important to me. They may not be concrete measures, but they will be asphalt measures, and sometimes they will be concrete measures. We will fill potholes. We will correct what needs to be corrected to keep the roads safe, and in this particular case, as the hon. member already knows because he said it, we will do a more major repair on that highway next year, because that's what fits in the budget. We will fix what's broken in the meantime.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that nearly 2,000 Athabasca area residents have signed a petition calling for this government to fix highway 55 now and given that I will table this petition later this week and given that highway 55 runs through three constituencies held by UCP MLAs and given that, in the words of the petition organizer, highway 55 is a safety issue, not a political issue, to the Minister of Transportation: will you commit here and now to working with local industry and your own colleagues to make highway 55 safer this year? It's time for the Minister of Transportation to get things moving rather than being a speed bump.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I work with the municipalities all the time, and members of our side of the House are incredibly aggressive with me to get potholes filled and roads repaired. It's important, and we take it seriously. I would say to the folks that signed the petition: please take yes for an answer. The construction will be done next year, and this year repairs will be done to keep the roads safe until the more – that's how we do it. It's a big network. We have \$7 billion in the budget, including 1 and a half billion in the next three years for repairs, and we're going to spend it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane has a question.

### Police Act Amendments

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Police forces play a vital role in keeping cities, towns, and communities safe. Our brave men and women in uniform work tirelessly to safeguard and protect Albertans. Our government is committed to ensuring that officers are well equipped and that their interactions with the public are courteous and professional. To the Minister of Justice: how will the proposed changes in the police amendment act ensure that Alberta's police are the most professional and well trained in the country?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane. Albertans expect their law enforcement officers to be professional and courteous, and the practice of carding creates a perception that policing is discriminatory and unfair. That is why, for the first time in the history of our country, Alberta's government is legislating a complete ban on carding, so that no Albertan suffers the indignity of carding. Under the proposed street check regulations there will be clear guidelines for law enforcement in their interactions with Albertans. I am looking forward to this.

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the practice of carding involves the gathering of information by stopping, questioning, and documenting individuals when no offence has taken place and given that this practice has the potential to be abused but given that it is important for officers to use their discretion and training in ways that ensure the safety and well-being of our communities, to the hon. minister: how will defining the conditions of carding help to protect the safety of Albertans?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Carding is clearly discriminatory and unfair because it is random and arbitrary. However, interactions between police and citizens are an important investigatory tool. To be clear, this is completely separate from carding, and that is why it was essential for us to create a clear definition of carding. Police officers from time to time do have valid and legitimate reasons to talk to an individual or ask for information. This is sound policy that enhances the rights of citizens and restores trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

2:40

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

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Given that several Liberal- and NDP-backed activist groups are calling to defund the police and given that we have seen an increase in crime, violence, and destruction of property in cities that have cut funding and support to police forces and given that our government is committed to reform, equality, and justice, to the same minister: what else is our government doing to support officers and other law enforcement agencies while improving protections for Albertans?

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

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I am proud of the work this government has done to ensure that all Albertans are

respected. In six months this government has done what the NDP could not do in all of the four years that they were in office. We banned carding. We introduced Bill 38, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, that for the first time recognized First Nation police and police commissions in our Police Act. We also have taken the tremendous step of reviewing the Police Act, something that the NDP could not do in four years.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this 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-East has a statement to make.

### Recall Act

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity to express the importance of strengthening the exercise of democracy in Alberta. The introduction of legislation providing the availability of recall, allowing Albertans to hold elected officials accountable throughout their term, is a significant democratic reform to our province. Accountability doesn't start and stop during elections. This mechanism will ensure that elected officials are properly executing their mandate as the chosen representative of their respective constituencies. The recall legislation holds elected officials at every level of governance accountable, which is something Albertans deserve. Everyone from the municipal level to the provincial falls under its authority. Even elected school board officials fall under the jurisdiction of the legislation.

Elected officials were voted for and entrusted by their constituents to serve and to champion their interests for the progress of their constituency. Therefore, it is fair and fitting that the same constituents must also have the power to revoke their trust through a recall process in case the official does not appropriately promote the interests of the constituency. It is a democratic process exercised by the electorate to reconfirm or withdraw the confidence they entrusted during the regular election to the elected official being sought to be recalled. The Minister of Justice has provided great insight on the implementation of this process as a benefit to Albertans. I am pleased to see that this strikes a great balance between ensuring accountability while also preventing abuse of the system. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this sets a new precedent for accountability in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Notices of Motions

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

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

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly agrees that, notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2), the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills shall report back to the Assembly within six days for Bill 214 and be it further resolved that the chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills table the final report on Bill 214 no later than 4:30 p.m. today, April 19, 2021, that immediately following the tabling of the report on Bill 214, if debate on concurrence is requested by a member of the Assembly, the Assembly revert immediately to Public Bills and

Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders for the purpose of the concurrence debate pursuant to Standing Order 8(7)(a.1) and upon the completion of the concurrence debate, if so requested, or the concurrence by the Assembly in the report, Bill 214 shall be considered to be on the Order Paper for second reading and, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, the Assembly shall debate second reading the evening of April 19, 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 68

#### Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move first reading of Bill 68, Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2021.

Referendums enhance democracy by consulting Albertans on important issues. During a referendum Albertans deserve to hear all viewpoints in the process. Bill 68 makes it clear that all MLAs, including ministers in their role as MLAs, can express their views on the topics of referendums and be part of a robust public debate. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Bill 68 would also update the Education Act to allow for the expansion of eligibility for trustees in the francophone regional school authorities. I hope all members on both sides of the aisle will support this legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 68.

[Motion carried; Bill 68 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few tablings regarding the condition of highway 55. I will be brief on them. I have, first, a tabling from a constituent up in the highway 55 area who has sent an e-mail describing the poor condition of the highway and the concerns she has over it.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I have tablings of photographs, various condition reports on the highway that show how badly it is in need of repair.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I have a photograph of a gentleman who received a semi-trailer tire in his yard as well as bits and pieces that came off it, a photograph of him with the trailer tire, that flew 350 feet to end up in his yard.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of an article written by a reporter about the condition of the roadway and the concerns that the individuals have there. It talks about the minister not wanting to do anything about it until 2022.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other tablings? The Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide the appropriate number of copies of the documents I referred to today in question period, which include documents, FOIPed through Alberta Health and AHS, which identify instances of Alberta Health discouraging AHS from creating long-term monitoring because of leadership not being interested in it; also, an AHS decision to provide long-term monitoring; and also the trigger limits, which I referred to today in my questions.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Is that three tablings?

**Ms Notley:** No. It's all three included in one document.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, supplemental responses to questions raised by Ms Phillips, hon. Member for Lethbridge-West; Mr. Schmidt, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar; and Ms Gray, Official Opposition House Leader, March 9, 2021, Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance 2021-22 main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at points of order, and at 1:52 the Official Opposition deputy House leader raised a point of order.

### Point of Order

#### Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At around 1:52 the Leader of the Official Opposition was referring to the documents from AHS about early warning triggers and government's inaction and unwillingness to share long-term modelling. In response to that question the Premier went on to say: as is her habit, she is completely fabricating things. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but accusing the Leader of the Official Opposition or any member of this House of fabricating things, I think, is clearly offside in terms of standing orders, in particular 23(h), (i), and (j). You cannot accuse other members of fabricating things. If the Premier wants to raise the decorum of this House, the Premier should withdraw and apologize.

2:50

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but just from what the hon. member said in his remarks, apparently the NDP is offended by the use of the term "falsehood." Yet I think today they used the phrase "misled the House"; they used "refuse to be honest"; they used "struggle to say things." I think this is a matter of debate. The NDP has terribly thin skin based on how they talk in this House. I would think that you should declare this a matter of debate, as it is, and suggest that the Official Opposition consider their own conduct in this House.

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

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and the hon. the Premier said the following: "Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, as is her habit, is just completely fabricating false information." Now, I would also say that I wouldn't describe this as the most parliamentary language, in particular in light of the comments that I've made about implying that individual members are misleading the House or groups of people are lying to the House or otherwise.

But I also would note that the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition said this specifically about the Premier:

A Premier incapable of taking responsibility is also incapable of sharing the facts.

And later went on to say:

... doesn't it sound to him like he misled this House? ... Why does the Premier struggle so hard to say things that are true? ...

This entire thing calls into question his ability to tell the truth.

I would suggest that the Deputy Official Opposition House Leader can't have it both ways, for his team to be able to make similar statements to "just completely fabricating false information." If he wants that to be a point of order, perhaps it would be in the best



interests of everyone if no one used such language, implying these sorts of things inside the Assembly.

This is not a point of order although both sides have used less than parliamentary language. For the time being, I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The second point of order was raised by the Member for Cardston-Siksika at 2:03, followed by the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Deputy Government House Leader. I'm not sure if these both can be combined into one point of order. I'm not sure, but I will call upon the minister.

### Point of Order

#### Referring to Party Matters

**Mr. McIver:** We'll take a whack at it here at your request, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of question period is to ask about government policy, not to discuss internal party matters. That is contrary to 23(1), "introduces any matter . . . that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." The practices and precedents of the Assembly are that question period is to ask questions about government's behaviour, not private members'. Consequently, this is a point of order, I think, quite clearly.

In summary, when recognized in question period, it says in the standing orders that a member should ask a question, be brief, seek information, and ask a question which is within the administrative responsibility of the government, of the individual minister addressed. Furthermore, there are precedents indicating that questions should not concern internal party matters, party or election expenses.

When the Member for Edmonton-Glenora asked: will the Premier tell students who feel abandoned by MLAs when he refuses to kick them out of caucus?" – the question has nothing to do with the administrative responsibility of the government and, furthermore, asks a question of internal party matters, Mr. Speaker. I expect, although I don't know yet because you haven't said, that you will find this not to be a point of order because, in my view, it is not.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was referring to the UCP as a party. I think the Premier has said on many occasions that Executive Council gets its authority from the government caucus, so the power of the government to act is based on their numbers in the government caucus. I think there are 17 of them who have called for lesser restrictions. Some have even said publicly to Albertans, those protesting public health measures, that they're not alone in that fight. That was clearly a matter of debate. I don't think it's a point of order.

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

I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, both during her remarks at 2:03 and her remarks at 2:05, spoke about Calgary public, Catholic school divisions – I'm paraphrasing here – the mass amount of students that are on online school or not, both of which are inside the purview of government policy. She referred to some NDP caucus policy and then subsequently asked about making schools safer and did include "defending the COVID-denying flank [of] your own caucus." "Will the Premier, the current Premier, tell students, staff, and families who feel abandoned by their UCP MLAs why he refuses to kick them out of caucus?"

I struggle to find how this is a matter specifically related to parties as there was no reference to the UC Party. The government's purview certainly is COVID in schools, which I believe was the heart of the question. I consider this a matter of debate. The matter is now dealt with and concluded.

### Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** At the appropriate time the Leader of the Opposition rose to give notice of a Standing Order 42. I want to provide, in the strongest of terms, direction to the Leader of the Opposition that the purpose of this period of time is a brief opportunity to speak to the urgency of why we should set aside all the other important business of the House to move immediately to the motion as you proposed it. I encourage you to stick to the urgency as I know that this has become a frequent tool that has been used by the opposition to bring other issues forward for debate.

### Bill 214 Debate

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour to operate within the rules. I do rise pursuant to SO 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion in regard to a matter that is urgent and pressing, specifically the motion which I just read into the record. For the purposes of brevity I will simply rely on the fact that I've done that.

In summary, this motion seeks unanimous consent to suspend several elements of the standing orders so that Bill 214, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act, can be debated this evening. First, I'd like to advise that pursuant to SO 42 I have provided now the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies. Further, while a motion under SO 42 requires no notice, my office did provide advance notice to the Speaker of my intention to . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is called. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise at this moment on a point of order for a number of reasons, the first of which is that this notice has actually been improperly worded. In fact, it says, if you read the SO . . . [interjections] I believe that I do have the floor. If I may continue, it says . . .

**The Speaker:** Sorry. The problem is that you haven't provided any reason why you've raised a point of order. If you can do that, that would be helpful.

**Mr. Schow:** Certainly. In the first line it says: "notwithstanding Standing Order 74.11(2)." It refers to six days. In the standing order it clearly indicates eight days, Mr. Speaker. Second off . . .

3:00

**The Speaker:** Sorry. I'll just provide that the purpose of why the Leader of the Opposition is speaking is to make the change to require the document be presented today, as of six days, instead of what the standing orders say; eight. If you have another point that is salient to whether or not this is in order or not, I'm happy to hear it, but the point of her SO 42 is to change it from eight days to six days for the purpose of Bill 214. Do you have another comment?

**Mr. Schow:** Not at the moment, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I would urge members opposite to reserve those kinds of comments for debate should we get to that point, which would be certainly very lovely.

As I was saying, we also did provide notice to the Speaker's office. The provision of SO 42 is to provide all members of this Assembly and, in many cases, private members in particular the opportunity to ensure that matters that are emergent to their constituents are debated and addressed in this House. Allow me to very briefly outline why this motion and its outcome are urgent and pressing today. There are two reasons that I will touch on, Mr. Speaker.

First, the Minister of Energy's coal policy online survey closes today, April 19. That online survey was very limited and directed in terms of the feedback and engagement that Albertans were allowed to provide. This is critical because we have seen tens of thousands of Albertans raise their hands, begging to be heard in this Assembly. The process of debate that we would have would provide at least some greater scope to the debate and issues that Albertans are asking to have heard by their elected officials. Given that the minister states that she wants to hear from Albertans by the end of the day today, it is pressing that today she hear arguments articulated on behalf of the tens of thousands of Albertans who are supporting this bill and calling on the government to adopt it and stop coal mining. An example of those arguments, for instance, would be those that were put forward by 35 scientists from the U of A in the letter released this weekend.

In addition, on the matter of coal consultation as a matter of urgency in the last three days the government released its terms of reference for the coal policy going forward and the engagement that they plan to do going forward. Unfortunately, that terms of reference explicitly excludes from consideration matters of water quality, water quantity, and land-use planning. These matters are at the heart of the call to limit coal mining, so their exclusion by the Minister of Energy means that future consultations have been rendered utterly ineffective; however, adoption of our bill, ultimately, in a timely fashion would provide a more fulsome, a more responsive, and a more evidence-based frame for consultations with Albertans.

The second and very important reason that we must expedite this bill is the risk of water contamination and irreparable land disturbance because it is immediate. It's now, and it must be addressed now, not in November, when the minister's coal committee reports. The health of sensitive headwaters is of a most pressing nature. It is an issue that Bill 214 addresses explicitly, unlike the minister's terms of reference. Next week the Legislative Assembly will be on a constituency break. During this time coal mining companies are expected to use heavy equipment to drill test pits and to begin building hundreds of kilometres of roads. This work is happening under five permits that were approved just in May of 2019. We know that just earlier this year, a company in B.C. was fined \$60 million for water contamination that occurred in one year alone. The fact is that this is urgent.

Tens of thousands of Albertans from all walks of life – ranchers, farmers, indigenous communities – have asked that the government stop. We want to provide a forum for that decision to be debated in this House. If members opposite want to give voice to their constituents, they should give us the unanimous consent that this motion would allow.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 42 this is a request for unanimous consent to proceed immediately to the motion as proposed by the hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Orders of the Day

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

#### Bill 207

#### Reservists' Recognition Day Act

[Debate adjourned April 12: Member Irwin speaking]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has eight minutes remaining should she choose to wish to do so. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it is an honour to rise in this House. Of course, it's quite disheartening when we don't have the opportunity to move forth pressing, pressing matters with private members' bills.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Before I get into that, you know, as I like to do the first time I get to speak in the House each week, I would just like to, of course, acknowledge all those folks who are working on the front lines right now. They are a full year plus into this pandemic. We may not be banging pots and pans like we were at the beginning, but they need to know that we see them and we support them. Whether they are in hospitals, in warehouses, in grocery stores, in schools, we thank them.

I had the opportunity to start speaking to Bill 207 last week but, of course, ran out of time, so I just wanted to start my comments where I finished last week. Oh, goodness, you know, we just saw the inability to discuss a private member's bill of great concern that's on coal mining in the eastern slopes. We've seen multiple times this government – obviously, they have the majority on this committee, the private members' bills committee – push forward into the House their own government-introduced bills but, alas, not the same for opposition bills. It is with – “disappointment” is perhaps a weak term for it – disappointment that we haven't had an opportunity.

The bill before us, Bill 207 – I was noting just before I was interrupted that, you know, I think a lot of folks in the military, folks who are reservists and give so much to our country have spouses who have pensions, as an example, yet this government was unwilling to discuss our private member's pensions bill in this here Chamber. I think about things like that, and I think about the fact that folks who are offering such an important service to our country deserve more than just symbolic recognition, right? They deserve tangible support.

You know, some of my colleagues have had the opportunity to talk a bit about their own connections to the military and their own personal sort of interest in these issues. I know that one of the things that folks talked about in previous debate was just, again, the need for actual support. When I think about veterans, as an example, I think about the need for investments in housing and in mental health, right? We know these are absolutely critical.

In fact, I was out – gosh, what day is it today? – last week, last Thursday night with a group called Water Warriors YEG. They do amazing work. They're a new grassroots organization that has sprung up. They are basically weekly delivering supports to folks in what might be called the inner city, which happens to be the area I represent. We started just outside my riding at the parking lot of Rogers Place. Then we went to a number of spots that are within my riding. We kind of did a loop. We went to the Hope Mission, Bissell Centre, George Spady Centre, and a few stops in between

throughout the neighbourhood I represent, Boyle Street in particular. We went to Boyle Street Community Services as well, I should mention.

3:10

I bring this up as a connection to this bill because one fellow that I ran into was actually somebody that I grew up with in Barrhead. He served in Afghanistan multiple times. I'm sure he won't mind me saying his name because he's got a pretty cool story. His name is Shawn Grove. He's a veteran. He's a year older than me, so he's 37. He's a veteran of Afghanistan. I hadn't seen him in years, so it was interesting to run into him at Water Warriors. I hadn't seen him in years, and he told me about just how – oh, gosh; it makes me emotional just to think about it – hard it was for him and how much he saw in his fellow servicemen and women the impacts of PTSD and mental health.

He said one of the most eye-opening experiences he had was when he was with Water Warriors a few weeks earlier and he ran into somebody who had also served overseas and was now homeless and just in a really, really tough, tough state. And I'm going to think about that for a long time – right? – because we know that there are folks who come back from their service and are just irreparably damaged. I don't want to believe that it is irreparable; I want to believe that we can help folks who give back so much to our country, and I think we help them by prioritizing their needs, by listening to them, by investing in crucial supports. Like I said: mental health supports, harm reduction, housing, as a really good example.

I kind of wanted to just frame that and give Shawn a shout-out as well. Shawn was really – there was a really cool story, actually. There was some media written about him back in, I think, 2006, 2007, when he returned from Afghanistan, because he'd actually learned one of the languages. I think it's called Pashto. Sorry if I got the pronunciation wrong. But it's kind of a neat story about how he learned one of the local languages and was able to connect with a lot of the folks there.

Yeah, you know, I think about this piece of legislation, Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and I think about my own connections. For those folks who missed our debate on this bill last week, a number of members opposite and on our side as well just talked about their own connections to the military. I know a number of members shared stories about their parents and grandparents serving. Some folks shared examples of cadets and other service that they did.

And not a lot of folks know this, but I was an air cadet. I was in 526 Barrhead Squadron. I was an air cadet from the age of 12 till, I guess, 17, when I left for university. It's an interesting thing to think about now because I did – I mean, if you don't know air cadets, the cadet movement is fairly closely connected to the military. As was shared in the House prior, many reservists, in fact, help out with cadets, and it was through cadets that I learned, oh, my goodness, so many things. You know, I got to fly gliders. My original plan was to get my pilot's licence, but I have pretty bad vision. I got eye surgery years ago. But that never happened.

Honestly, I look back at that time in cadets and look back at it fondly. I mean, I'm not wearing a tie today, but this is the reason I know how to tie ties. I can tell you about the four-in-hand knot, the Windsor knot, the half-Windsor. All those things I still remember, like, being 12 years old and learning all that. I look down at my shoe . . . [Member Irwin's speaking time expired]

Oh, gosh. I've got so much more to say about this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 207? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today. Grateful to be in this Chamber among such distinguished company. Also, grateful to be speaking on Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont and my good friend.

Reservists can be your partner, your friend, your neighbour, your colleague. There are upwards of over 2,300 reservists between army, air force, and naval reserves in Alberta. The majority of these reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in postsecondary studies. While having a somewhat normal life, reservists continue to support our communities. This can be done through domestic military efforts such as through natural disaster situations, for example the Slave Lake and Fort McMurray forest fires and the 2013 Calgary floods. Internationally, reservists have participated alongside regular force members in Latvia and Ukraine as well as in the world wars, and many have volunteered to participate in Afghanistan, Madam Speaker.

There are so many other humanitarian causes that reservists have participated in throughout history. When they are on duty, reservists participate in a variety of trades, combat arms, engineering, and army signalling. They have also supported the military in other supportive capacities such as logistics, human resources, finance, and other roles not directly involved with conflict. Reservists are unique people. They have no obligation to participate overseas, but many volunteers do so, putting their lives at risk as well as their civilian lives on hold.

When a reservist is eligible for leave, they have to get granted leave from their employers. An employee may take reservist leave for deployment to a Canadian Forces outside of Canada or inside of Canada that is assisting with an emergency or aftermath, for annual training, and for other operations set out by the minister. The reservists are able to take up to 20 days a year of leave from their work for annual training and take leave as long as necessary to accommodate the period of service required for international or domestic deployment. As you can see, their sense of duty comes with a major halt on their civilian lives. It takes a lot of bravery and a strong sense of duty in order to be a reservist or any member of the Canadian Armed Forces, for that matter, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge and thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for his service in the Canadian Armed Forces reserves for two years and his continued work for the government of Alberta as a liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces. The UCP caucus is well served with him in that capacity. I thank him. He has worked with many stakeholders directly or in relating to the Canadian Armed Forces, one of which is the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, which is an organization of more than 140 Canadian volunteers who work in partnership with a defence team to engage employers, educational institutions, and other organizations. They emphasize how valuable the reserve service is to our communities, our province, and our country. With this stakeholder engagement and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont's experience in the reserves, I could think of no one better for bringing forward this piece of legislation and making the recommendation of what day reservists' recognition day will be held on.

Though in this bill reservists' recognition day will be held on the last day of September, the date was chosen because it correlates with the reserves' 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 in the reserves. Luckily for me and other members of this Assembly, we can ask the Member for Leduc-Beaumont about his experience in the reserves, but for Albertans not so lucky as to know someone in the reserves, they can visit this open house.

The government of Alberta is heavily involved in the employment of reserve force members. Alberta's government recognizes the strong leadership skills and exceptional contributions that reservists have made to their communities. In Canada 97 per cent of Canadians live 45 minutes away from one of the 122 reserve units across 117 communities in Canada. In Alberta there are six reserve units in Calgary, seven reserve units in Edmonton, one in Lethbridge, one in Medicine Hat, and two in Red Deer. If this bill is passed, I am excited for all Albertans to acknowledge the importance of reservists and to visit one of the many open houses across the province. The reservists' hard work and dedication to their country should be acknowledged publicly. Their efforts should be celebrated, and more people should know who reservists are and what they do for their country and for their province.

I am proud to support Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and I encourage every member of this Assembly to support the reserves and the Canadian Armed Forces through this bill. Also, Madam Speaker, while I'm standing, I will take a moment and again thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for his service as a reservist and for the exceptional work that he does for his constituents in this province. I will also take a moment to thank all the members who serve in the Armed Forces and defend our freedoms in this country.

Both my grandfathers in my family, on my mom's side and my dad's side, served in World War II, and I'm honoured that that is a legacy that's part of my family. Although I have not served in the military myself, I certainly understand the sacrifice that it is. I heard many stories before my grandfather passed away about that and also from my grandfather on my father's side on the importance of the service they gave.

With that, Madam Speaker, I encourage all members to vote in favour of Bill 207, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

3:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just wondering how much time is left in this debate if you could let me know.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have 10 minutes.

**Ms Glasgo:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

I just want to start by thanking the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. I know that in his work as the government's representative to the Canadian Armed Forces and as liaison, he's done a considerable amount of work, including joining myself and the Premier at Canadian Forces base Suffield and BATUS in Suffield, Alberta. He came down to see the base. I know they also got to go and see some explosions out in the field and see some live exercises going on at CFB Suffield. It was great to see our liaison to the military in Suffield and in southern Alberta to meet with those men and women in uniform who are working so hard and training right here in Alberta to go off to armed combat.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to start by saying thank you to everyone who does serve in any capacity, be it the reserves or in active duty, right now. These people sacrifice so much every day, including their lives. The reserves are a special class who will put their life on hold to go into dangerous scenarios if necessary and defend our rights and freedoms.

Canada, we know, has a rich history of answering the call when our military is needed. In fact, my own family has been a part of answering that call. My great-grandfather Orville Studer was in World War II. I've spoken about that in the House. I know that he

was deeply involved with his army buddies until the day that he passed away. Being able to speak to his accomplishments, what he's done for our country as well as to what future servicemen and -women will do is a great honour and privilege for me today.

We know that Canada's history involving answering the call has happened in world wars I and II, Korea, Afghanistan, after 9/11, and numerous UN peacekeeping missions, for which we are very well known. Our rich military history is a large part, Madam Speaker, of why Canadians travellers will proudly display the maple leaf on their luggage. I know that, in fact, my fiancé and I have done the same thing. We always want to make sure that we have something pointing out that we're Canadian. We love our American neighbours, but we like to keep that very proud, that we are in fact Canadian.

An essential part of the Canadian Forces is the reservists, Madam Speaker. Reservists are lawyers, health service providers, teachers, tradespeople, and anything in between. They give up a substantial portion of their lives every year to train so that they're ready when our nation needs them. Bill 207, in my opinion, is just a small token of gratitude that we can give to recognize their service. It doesn't distract from the other days that we have set aside to honour those who serve. This is just one more opportunity to acknowledge reservists in particular, who have done so much for us and have answered the call to duty. Bill 207 provides that special day for these men and women. It doesn't necessarily separate our reservists from the rest of the Canadian Forces, but it acknowledges their exceptional circumstances.

Members of the army reserve in southern Alberta are members of the Southern Alberta Light Horse. The A Squadron is based at the Patterson Armoury, next to the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede grounds, a very well-known area in Medicine Hat. The Southern Alberta Light Horse is part of the armoured unit at the Canadian Armed Forces, born from predecessor units that served in the Northwest Rebellion, both world wars, and many international and domestic operations.

These domestic operations include aiding in disaster relief like floods, especially in Medicine Hat. We know that Medicine Hat has flooded several times. It always seems to be right around my birthday: a fun fact. But it's always great to see our reservists and those soldiers who are visiting Canada through the British Army training unit and others, even sometimes NATO, coming to actually help Medicine Hatters when our community floods, which seems to be too often, but we're getting better at that, not flooding. Domestic operations include aiding in disaster relief like floods, which we know that they have done in Medicine Hat.

Many of these reservists train at CFB Suffield, as I've already said. Founded in 1972, CFB Suffield provides a unique training ground for the Canadian Forces. If you've been down to Medicine Hat, especially down to CFB Suffield, you know that it's a very arid temperature. It's extremely dry heat for days on end, and that's something that few other places provide. CFB Suffield in Canada actually can replicate the heat of the desert in the Middle East; almost, not quite, but we do our best. Like I said, it was really great that we actually got to host the Premier and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont in his capacity as liaison to the Armed Forces. I believe that day was a particularly hot one. We got to see just how hard these men and women are working in exceptional circumstances, even here in Canada, before they are deployed to other areas. There's no better place to train, and I'm very proud to have CFB Suffield within the riding of Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Finally, Madam Speaker, we know that our reservists give so much to our country. They're protecting our rights and freedoms, so I don't think that it's too much to provide an extra day in the year where Albertans can honour the sacrifices. In fact, I think it's the

least that we can do. Personally, I support Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and I want to encourage all members of the House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 207? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise – I know I don't have that long – to speak to Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act. It's been actually quite a privilege to hear so many members of the House speak and share their personal stories or personal connections to members of the Armed Forces, perhaps grandparents, aunts, uncles, or just family members. Obviously, there's a long connection for many members in this House and many Albertans to those who have served both active duty in the Armed Forces but also who are serving as reservists. I understand, of course, that the sponsor of this bill, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, is one of those individuals.

I think it is absolutely an important thing to give recognition and to offer our thanks to those individuals who, of course, actively serve but also those who put their name forward and are prepared to serve if called. That's really what we're talking about when it comes to reservists, right? We're really talking about individuals from all walks of life, men and women who may be regularly employed in other activities. They may be students, civil servants, labourers, business owners, academics: all of these individuals who are putting their name forward to say that they are ready and prepared to serve if called upon to do so.

Really it's a tribute to I think the spirit of Canadians and Albertans, who are always ready to help out and to do their part and to do their duty when called to do so. Reservists are certainly an important part of that group of Canadians and Albertans. Recognizing those individuals, as this bill proposes to do, is important. It seems like a simple thing to do. It doesn't take much in terms of resources, but it may be impactful and meaningful to those – simply a tribute to their willingness to serve. I understand that the bill sets aside the last, I believe, Saturday in September to be the reservists' recognition day. I want to thank the Member for Cardston-Siksika for providing a little background. I wasn't aware. I was wondering what the significance of that date was, and the Member for Cardston-Siksika gave some background around it tying in with the open house. That was very useful information for me to understand why that date.

We do know that there is a date in June, the first Sunday of June, where we recognize the Canadian Armed Forces. This is a separate date, and I guess that day will be coming up not too long from now, where we recognize the Canadian Armed Forces, but then to now have a date in the end of September to recognize the reservists. Again, I think the members of the private members' bills committee, who first heard this, sponsored and brought forward this bill, as well as all those who have spoken in this House to date have shown their support for this kind of measure. It certainly reflects the value that we place on reservists and the call of duty – right? – those people who have that sense of willingness to put themselves forward if called.

Now, I also want to take an opportunity, if I can, to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, who, as many of you know, when the NDP were in government, served as the liaison from the Alberta government, Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces, and certainly, proudly performed that work. There were also a number of measures taken by the former NDP government to show their support for the Armed Forces and for the military that we should all be very proud of. Certainly, some of the things that our party did when in government brought forward a number of

things that I think impacted and improved the quality of life for individuals who are serving in the Armed Forces. I believe, for example, one of the things that was done was the former NDP government opened a veterans' service centre and transitional housing for homeless veterans in December 2018. This was, I understand, the first of its kind in Canada.

3:30

We also, of course, brought in legislation in 2016 to recognize Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day on June 27, which I know many of us take the time every year to recognize. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood spoke very eloquently and, as she often does, personally about her experiences with individuals in her community and her constituency who have served and who have experienced PTSD. We know that that is an incredibly damaging and long-lasting unfortunate consequence of active service, many times, for individuals of the Armed Forces. It is, to all of our disappointment, I believe, and I think our failing a little bit to know the number of individuals who have actively served who do come back and end up not only with PTSD but end up homeless, with addictions issues, those sorts of challenges. Really, that's a call to all of us.

When we talk about thanking the individuals who have served actively or have even put their name forward to serve actively, it also puts – it's not just the thanks that we give to them at the time or even when they return home or even on days like we're talking about today, while it is important and it's an important gesture, but we also need to come through with very concrete supports in the time when there may be significant consequences as a result of serving. As per everything, I believe, Madam Speaker, when we're in this House, we find that so many pieces of legislation and the things that we talk about are often very intertwined with so many other things. It's difficult to talk about acknowledging and recognizing the value of those who have put their name forward to be reservists and those who have done active service in the Armed Forces without also talking about things like homelessness, things like PTSD, things like addictions issues because they're all intertwined, right?

We cannot rest. I don't suppose that anybody in this House is prepared to say that we're resting simply on saying that this is it in terms of our recognition for individuals who have put their name forward or have served actively. We need to all do better. I mean, it ties closely in to supportive housing, in to harm reduction, in to all of these measures because I think we know that unfortunately there is a connection between those who may have had PTSD and a lot of the issues we're talking about today in terms of, you know, addictions and homelessness.

Recognizing reservists through a day is one way that we pay tribute to a significant and important group of people who have put their name forward and who may be called. Of course, we have many examples historically of individuals who were reservists who actually were called into duty. It's never something that we hope to have to do, but it is something that we need to be prepared for in all circumstances. Of course, at any given time we have many Albertans who are in active duty overseas, so it certainly is a very real possibility. I think that when individuals – and I'll be clear. I don't have any reservists in my family, but I do know of those who have. They do it with the intention that they will have to serve. They do it with that absolute commitment to that possibility of serving and take it very, very seriously.

I think that it's a very important thing that we recognize that commitment to service, but we also need to fully recognize and provide the supports and thanks in real, concrete ways and supports. When somebody does actually serve and comes back, we can't

simply say, “Thank you; we’ve got a day to recognize you,” and that’s where we’re done. We have a lot of work to do to make sure that we are fully thanking them for their service and making sure that they are supported to lead full, happy lives, as they’ve earned and they deserve to do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but we will now ask the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont to close debate.

**Mr. Rutherford:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the members of the Assembly for the healthy and thoughtful debate that we’re hearing here around reservists. It’s important that we advocate, of course, for initiatives that represent both our constituents but also for the additional roles that we have. As the military liaison I’ve had a unique opportunity to represent more than just the constituents of Leduc-Beaumont but also the women and men in uniform and their families in bringing issues to the government and working to address them.

Today specifically we’re working to highlight reservists and the great work that they do. Through consultation the Reservists’ Recognition Day Act was chosen to be the last Saturday of September. As previously mentioned, this date was agreed upon to allow for maximum participation in celebration of reservists as they gather, hopefully, again this fall for the Canadian Armed Forces open house.

I want to thank Colonel Mike Vernon, commander of the 41st Brigade; Colonel Kevin Weidlich, the regional liaison officer for the Canadian Armed Forces employer support program; and Carolyn Patton, chair of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council; as well as Brigadier-General Stephen Lacroix, the former commander of 3rd Canadian Division, for contributing to the decision on the last day of September.

Throughout the debate in second reading I was grateful to hear the support from members of the Assembly and, obviously, the recognition of the incredible work of everybody in our Canadian Armed Forces. I heard speeches and so many personal stories that were intertwined. Obviously, a lot of us either have a direct or fairly close connection to the military and a number of currently serving members and veterans in our ridings spread out across Alberta. I think it’s an excellent opportunity as well for reservists to raise their profile to employers and also to highlight the skill set that they have developed and that hiring a reservist provides an organization with: leadership skills, discipline, the ability to think under pressure and with stress, and to work as a team.

That’s why over the past few weeks, as I have considered more about this bill, I really want to truly recognize the reservists and their invaluable contribution as well. Through additional conversations with stakeholders, I look forward to moving an amendment in Committee of the Whole that will reduce the required days before a reservist can seek leave. It’s currently six months, and I hope to bring that down to 12 weeks as well, which will align federally and at the same time allow reservists the opportunity to train and deploy when necessary. I hope other provinces eventually follow suit if they haven’t already.

As we talk about tangible things that we are doing for the Canadian military, of course, it was brought up by Brooks-Medicine Hat that the Premier and I had the chance to go down to Suffield and watch a live fire exercise with the British military working with tanks and artillery and mortar fire, and that was something that I’ll never forget. It was amazing to watch. I made the rookie move of when the first tank went off, I ducked. I don’t know what I was going to dodge at that point, but that’s just, I guess, that the instinct kicked in. It didn’t make me look as brave as the other men there – and women, actually. Sorry about that.

Also, the veteran-friendly campus initiative through HIMARC, to encourage veterans to attend postsecondary when they complete their service or take leave from it, and also with HIMARC on helping to fund PTSD research through their 3MDR program, which is showing great success. I was given the opportunity to watch one of the sessions, and the individual who was going through that talked about how successful it had been in their life compared to talk therapy. To be able to get funding for that and, hopefully, make really positive strides on PTSD research I think would be valuable, not only to our veteran community but to anybody who succumbs to PTSD.

I know, from my 10 years in law enforcement, that I’m not immune. You know, I hope there’s support there if that kind of thing happens, of course, and it can happen to anybody. The Homes For Heroes initiative supports veterans with transitional housing as well and really developing good relationships with the MFRCs, the military family resource centres, over these last few years and during the pandemic to make sure that they have the line into the government if they needed requests and to work on making sure that their voices and that their families’ voices were heard and that they know that they can reach out any time as well.

This bill: I hope it just adds to the recognition. There are a lot of tangible things being done, but it’s just an additional day that we can go out and learn about what reservists do, how skilled they are.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has moved second reading of Bill 207, Reservists’ Recognition Day Act.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:39 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Madu	Schmidt
Getson	McIver	Schow
Glasgo	Nielsen	Sigurdson, L.
Glubish	Orr	Singh
Goodridge	Pancholi	Stephan
Gotfried	Pon	Turton
Guthrie	Reid	Walker
Hunter	Rosin	Wilson
Irwin	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Rutherford	

Totals: For – 29 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 207 read a second time]

### Bill 209

#### Cost of Public Services Transparency Act

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

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m excited to stand and move second reading Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act.

Madam Speaker, it was great to see consensus on honouring our reservists with Bill 207. I hope that we can see the same here. To that end, I would ask the members the following question: do you

think that it is good for Albertans to know how their taxpayer dollars are spent? If not, why not?

Madam Speaker, there is so much good that can be accomplished by trusting Albertans and empowering them to know how their taxpayer dollars are spent. The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act is at its heart equipping Albertans with this knowledge of how their money is spent. The 2019 consumer tax index says that the average Canadian family spends more of its income on taxes than on the basic necessities of life. If taxes cost more than our basic necessities, taxpayer literacy is a necessary component of financial literacy. In these challenging times it is urgent that there is more financial literacy, especially for our children. As parents we want all of our children to enjoy the same opportunities that we were blessed with in this great province.

It is a great service to trust the public. Give them access and opportunity to know the costs of the public services they pay for; for example, going to school, going to a doctor's office, municipal operating costs. This allows the public to better understand the importance of using government services responsibly. It also makes government and public service providers more accountable to provide services in a more sustainable manner, respecting taxpayer dollars and the sacrifices of Alberta families, businesses, and individuals.

Madam Speaker, we have a very serious problem. [interjections] Quiet. This province has a structural deficit of billions of dollars. That is not sustainable.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar does not have the floor. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South does.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. Often when the truth is spoken, individuals can sometimes feel threatened by it.

In our province we have a structural deficit of billions of dollars. That is not sustainable. We need to let the public know the truth of our situation. There is a great, urgent need in this province to work together and to get our act together. Doing the right things, even small and simple, can be magnified into great and marvellous outcomes. I know this is true.

The MacKinnon report says that Alberta has one of the highest per capita costs of government. We need our public services to be financially sustainable so they can be available for our children. The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act supports the principles of Budget 2021. Our Finance minister said that one of the fiscal anchors for our province must be normalizing the per capita cost of government towards comparator provinces.

4:00

Government must work from the inside out to control its costs. This bill works from the outside in, empowering the public to better understand and support this urgent, critical need. The mechanics of the bill seek to focus disclosure on the larger operating costs of government. It seeks to do so in a way that is flexible. It can be fine-tuned and improved and use existing reporting mechanisms such as performance reports, property tax bills. The bill is simple, and it is principled. In committee we heard from wonderful stakeholders – the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the CEO of the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce, and the CEO of the Canada Strong and Free Network, formerly the Manning foundation – who all spoke in favour of this bill. By letting Albertans know the cost of the services they are paying for, it engages them as citizens of this province and supports a culture of more accountability for government.

Now, I know that some do not like this bill and the accountability that comes with it, and I would like to address up front some of the potential misrepresentations that some may attempt to make. Madam Speaker, one question that may be asked is: will this bill apply to all public services? The answer to that is no. It applies to designated public services. The vast majority of public services will not be designated. The decision to designate a public service is at the discretion of cabinet and the Premier, exercising common sense. This would include a consideration of the costs that are known, that can be improved [interjections] – quiet – and where the largest benefit from disclosure to the public lies.

Madam Speaker, another question that might be brought is: will this add to red tape? Letting Albertans know how much things cost is not red tape. Red tape is where the benefit is less than the cost. The cost is very low; here the benefit is very large.

Another question is: well, isn't this information already available? It is, but citizens have to hunt for it. Madam Speaker, prior to becoming an MLA, I was the founder and president of the Red Deer Taxpayers' Association. We had a website where citizens could go and see how municipal operating expenses year over year exceeded inflation and population growth. Citizens had to be aware of that and hunt for it. The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act aims to provide that information to them so they don't have to hunt for it. It would be provided on things such as property tax bills, report cards. When you go to the doctor's office, there'll be a sign in the doctor's office that says what the cost of an average visit is. When you go to the hospital, it will share with the public what the average cost of an emergency visit is. These are very transparent costs, and taxpayers won't have to hunt for it.

I want to give a couple of examples of where this can come in valuable. Say that only five services were designated. The act would inject this element of financial accountability on more than 50 per cent of the direct or indirect provincial government expenditures. For example, a visit to the doctor's office: we know that health is over 40 per cent of the government of Alberta operating budget, and physician compensation is the single largest cost item. Under the act there could be a uniform sign posted in every waiting room setting out a small schedule of the most commonly encountered taxpayer costs for a visit, updated annually. From a red tape analysis perspective these are known estimated costs in the ministry, and there is minimal cost to print the same amounts in waiting rooms, perhaps at \$100 per sign, where physician offices bill hundreds of thousands or millions, aggregate billings of \$5.4 billion.

A visit to an emergency room: again, a uniform sign in each waiting room setting out the most commonly encountered taxpayer costs, perhaps with a comparison of the average cost to go to a doctor's office. We know that our emergency rooms are often at full capacity. You know, providing the differential in terms of costs may help taxpayers in making decisions that are more respectful of taxpayer dollars when it is appropriate.

Attending postsecondary schooling, our young adults invest time and money into their educations. This information could remind them about their investment and those of taxpayers and remind them to consider fiscal responsibility as they transition into their own careers. Again, universities have budgets, know their student populations. Per-student costs are not hard to figure out. Final grade reports are provided to students each semester, so there isn't an additional report that has to be provided. It can be provided on the report itself.

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to provide some opening comments around Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act. There's quite a bit to unpack here, so I'll try to get through as much of it as possible in the time I have. I'm sure some of my colleagues will have more to say above and beyond that.

For all intents and purposes the bill intends to have public servants report used costs, what is being spent providing a service to an Albertan. As well, a designated public service provider must provide a reportable cost of the public service to the user of the public service, which, of course, as was just mentioned, is identified by cabinet using the – I believe the words were: common-sense approach.

I guess the problem that I have, Madam Speaker, is that I don't know how common this common sense seems to be. The reason I'm saying that is that we're talking essentially about transparency. This is saying that currently, right now, the expenses are not transparent enough to Albertans, so I can't help but wonder if, in the journey to become more transparent, we are going to see things like the contract for the failed Keystone XL pipeline and what Albertans are on the hook for in terms of that. You know, I guess it's very difficult for me to buy into this government's willingness to be transparent. I mean, my gosh, the Premier wasn't even able to disclose a donor list, yet we're expecting even more of them around this.

As I'm looking through the bill, one of the things that we heard was around educating how taxpayer dollars are spent, and of course there was a little bit of emphasis on the truth. I guess I wonder: maybe would that include things such as the \$27 million which is found in Budget 2021, which the member referenced earlier, that this bill works in conjunction with? Perhaps we'll start to maybe see how some of that money is being spent in this war room. We've certainly asked a lot of questions about it. We haven't gotten very much transparency around that, so my hope is that maybe we will see a little bit of that.

Then one of the other initial comments that I have is that the bill is saying that totals of the reported cost must be included in annual reports by the ministries. We've certainly seen, through this last set of estimates, a number of items throughout multiple ministries that were taken out of the report, providing less information, less transparency to Albertans. You know, is Bill 209 supposed to work in conjunction with Budget '21, or is it potentially going to work against what the government seems to be trying to give – or I should say the lack of information – to Albertans on how their public tax dollars are being spent here in the province?

4:10

It does leave me with some questions here, questions that I certainly had in the private members' committee, where I'm a member and I got a chance to review Bill 209 a little bit. As I always like to, I always dive into, you know, what the language is saying in the legislation. When I was looking in Bill 209, throughout, of course, page 1, around all the definitions, continuing through, almost completely, page 2 – but I wanted to focus in on one area, which was (j), the public service. There's a listing throughout there on page 2:

- (A) a health service;
- (B) the provision of an education program;
- (C) the provision of a post-secondary . . .

And so on and so forth.

One of the comments that I heard – sorry; just trying to find where I wrote that down – was around making things flexible. The problem is that they've become so flexible that it's up to, as is stated in the legislation, the designation of the minister or ministers, whatever the case may be.

When I look in section 1(j)(ii)(A), a health service – and I asked this question during the private members' bill committee – what is being envisioned there? When I read that, I see a front-line nurse who is currently overworked, under a lot of stress, trying to do their job, dealing with this pandemic on top of everything else, and now all of a sudden they might have to fill out a report about how they've spent their time because, at the end of the day, their time is money. You know, having spent a lot of time, when my daughter was younger, in the hospital with her, getting to see the hard work that these nurses do, the incredible work that nurses do trying to handle all their patients throughout the day – sometimes they barely have time for a break, let alone filling out extra paperwork about where their time was spent.

When I look at that, in terms of how Bill 209 is structured, do we have a situation where that nurse is now going to have to spend overtime to fill out this paperwork in order to be able to show where their time is being spent and how much it's costing taxpayers? If overtime is not being allowed, which we've certainly heard rumblings about, issued through AHS, probably through government, does that now put even more pressures on that nurse to try to finish that paperwork, and then if it doesn't happen, is that nurse going to possibly be subjected to disciplinary action? I've certainly seen that throughout my time, where a company has instituted a process – they require their employee to be able to do this on top of everything else that they're doing. But if their time is so filled that they aren't able to get to that, does it result in discipline? I say: yes, it does.

So when I read this, I can't help but wonder – it's my job to look at this – what can go wrong? Where can things go sideways? I'm certainly not saying that that's the member's intent. I highly doubt it. But I never think about the people in this room right now. We know what's going on; we know potentially what the intent is. Once it gets outside of this room, how do people read it? How do people interpret it? Then how do they implement it as well?

A service provided by a municipality was another one that I kind of keyed on. As you know, there's a lot going on at a municipality. Is, potentially, garbage disposal going to be under scrutiny for how much time they are spending and what it's costing taxpayers? As we know, municipalities tend to get a lot of money from the province for operating expenses because they're not allowed to run any deficits whatsoever. Is this going to possibly be a reporting mechanism that could further create hardship?

I certainly remember when Canada Post brought in a requirement where they were counting steps of their postal workers almost to the point where postal workers, instead of walking on the step and then onto the sidewalk, would kind of jump at a bit of an angle just to save that one second. It sounds silly, but that's actually what was going on, because with that one second here at this house, that one second, they all of a sudden were able to complete their route.

My other favourite one is the whole warehouse production system. And so as . . .

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act. This government was elected to get Alberta's finances in order and ensure stable economic growth for our future. Fiscal transparency is a key component of that commitment, and it always has been. Albertans truly do deserve to know where their taxpayer dollars are being put to use and what it costs to access various government services. I sometimes get asked questions about these things by constituents.



While the cost of public services is in many cases available already to the public, the reality is that this legislation adds to clarity and to the visibility of that information. Too often to find this information Albertans have to comb through obscure resources, in some cases try to accurately calculate this information themselves from various sources. Yeah, the information exists already, but Bill 209 will make it far more accessible and highly visible to Albertans without them having to make calculations from complex documents.

Many folks have asked me why Alberta no longer provides an annual statement of health care costs. Sending individual notices to Albertans, quite frankly, was very costly and really isn't feasible. Bill 209 will implement a much more affordable approach to giving Albertans access to the general sort of costs of particular services. The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act is enabling legislation that's not prescriptive so as to avoid creating a bunch of unnecessary red tape and just really driving up the costs of it.

This act will only apply to what are called designated public services. In order for a service to become designated, it needs to meet a couple of priorities. I mean, the first will be that it has to be funded using public funds, and maybe the more important thing is that it has to be specifically designated as that so that the managing public servants will be aware that they need to be prepared to provide the data in a clear and obvious way. It'll be at the discretion of cabinet and the Premier to designate what those public service designations are. They will just simply exercise common sense, take into consideration costs that are already known and which service-cost disclosures will have the largest benefit for the public.

The kinds of services that might be made available to the public for information would be, for instance, posting the general across-the-province average cost of a visit to an emergency room or a doctor's office. And let me be clear. There will be no personal information. There will be no specific per-individual kind of information posted. This is an aggregate or an average cost of what it costs Alberta as a province in general to provide, say, an emergency room visit across the province. Another possibility might be disclosing per-student costs for K to 12 education with report cards. That'll be an average cost, but it won't be a particular, specific school or teacher or anything like that. There's no personal information. For the previous Member for Edmonton-Decore, I believe it was, to suggest that employees will now be required to fill out time or reporting is ludicrous. It's not even part of this bill. These are the average, general costs of departments within the government.

**4:20**

Another option might be disclosing per-credit costs across the province for university students, which could be provided in their semester report, or the municipal operating expenses to ratepayers could be provided with their municipal tax assessment. It's a simple matter of the department gathering the information that already exists and just adding it there so that people can see it. That's what this is all about. There'll be no silliness like people having to fill out reports of how many hours they put on something. That's completely outside of the realm of this.

After becoming a designated public service, the public service provider, meaning the department, would be required to disclose a reportable cost to public users of that service. To avoid incurring additional costs on public service providers and adding red tape, pre-existing written notice communications will be used to provide reportable costs. In other words, you will not have a specific mail-out to you, which would cost thousands of dollars, reporting some specific cost. For example, costs could be communicated on report cards that already exist, through written public notices at doctors'

offices or in emergency rooms, or any system of delivery, really, which this is all about, that would be obvious to people.

Reportable cost determinations are determined under regulation to allow easier refinement and precision. Section 6 of the act deems that reportable costs have to be expressed in dollars. They have to be generally per unit, so per credit of university or per health visit or per student K to 12 or for municipal operating budgets. They need to be comparable, either on an annual basis or possibly to other provinces or some other method of comparability, and they need to use existing and reasonably affordable and available reportable data.

The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act also requires public service providers to report that they have complied with this requirement to the minister on disclosing the costs of their service to the public. They simply need to report to the minister how they have completed the delivery of this information. These compliance costs will be included in the minister's annual report to the public.

Mr. Speaker, we are in unprecedented times of economic hardship. We need to find innovative ways to save costs. You know, even 1 per cent in cost savings across Alberta would amount to over \$600 million of Alberta's current operating budget. Performance measurement and reporting may seem like a small thing, but you know what? Albertans have a right to know the value of the benefits they receive from government. As I said, I sometimes get asked these questions by constituents. Bill 209 will simply increase taxpayer literacy, supporting civil participation towards more accountability for government. This is incredibly important as it will encourage fiscal accountability of Albertans and give them the chance to exercise sound judgment when they access public services.

It will also increase accountability and sustainability in the delivery of government-funded public services. While the government must work, as the sponsor of the bill has said, from the inside out to control costs, this bill actually empowers Albertans to better understand and support controlling costs from the outside in. Budget '21 is an inside-out effort of government to ensure sustainable practices that will make for a stable economic future. The Cost of Public Services Transparency Act is an outside-in initiative that will give Albertans the chance to support the economic future of their province through transparency of per capita costs of public services. Sometimes the best changes can be made through awareness and engaging the public as citizens, as fiscal stewards of their province, and giving them full and fair information in an accessible way.

Madam Speaker, Bill 209 will encourage accountability among public service providers to provide services in a sustainable manner and encourage respect for taxpayer dollars. What Bill 209 does is make Albertans aware of how they are using their tax dollars when accessing public services and empowering them with the truth of our fiscal situation. This bill is purposely not prescriptive, but it's flexible. It allows for continuous improvement of its application and adaptation as we move forward. Albertans have widely expressed their desire to get big government out of the way and take charge of their own futures, and this is one tool that they can use to do just that.

I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for bringing this act to the table, and I look forward to seeing its application in the future. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 209? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and say a few words against Bill 209. Now, I want to use the time that I have allotted to me to talk about issues around accountability, to talk about issues around transparency with respect to this

government, and then talk about who this bill applies to and who, more importantly, it doesn't apply to, at least according to the intent that I'm deriving from the member.

Now, with respect to accountability, Madam Speaker, as you know, I was getting a little bit excited when the Member for Red Deer-South was presenting this bill. He gave Albertans quite a 10-minute lecture on the need for accountability, yet at the height of the second wave of this pandemic, when Albertans needed their government members hard at work making sure that they were healthy and looked after, this member was on a plane to Phoenix.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm sure it's no surprise that I'm standing here to stop this particular route of questioning, which is very clearly not in line with the bill which we are debating, which is Bill 209, the Cost of Public Services Transparency Act. I recognize your preamble was set up to most certainly not talk about this bill, and I will direct you back on track. Keep your comments related to the bill at hand, and please continue with your remarks.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, had he done the honourable thing, he would have apologized and possibly even resigned, but in response to abandoning Albertans at their time of need, he defended his actions, said that it was, in fact, the right thing to do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, come on. Back on Bill 209, not individual members in this House. This is the second time.

**Mr. Schmidt:** With respect to the issue of accountability and transparency I will note – perhaps you will find this related to the bill, Madam Speaker – that this Member for Red Deer-South was also on Treasury Board and had the opportunity to . . . [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm standing, hon. members. I'm not sure why anyone is talking.

Hon. member, I will provide some caution. While these current remarks are not completely offside, this debate is not to be about individual members in this Assembly. I will provide another round of cautioning and ask you to continue with your remarks related to Bill 209.

**Mr. Schmidt:** As I was saying, Madam Speaker, this member was a part of Treasury Board, and Treasury Board has an important role in determining how the finances of the province of Alberta are reported. Now, had this member been successful in achieving his goals related to financial transparency and accountability, we wouldn't be here needing to debate this ridiculous private member's bill, because Treasury Board would have agreed with his arguments that this is what the people of Alberta needed with respect to accountability and transparency when it comes to the finances of the province. What's clear to me is that what this member failed to achieve while he was on Treasury Board, he's now trying to do from the floor of the Legislature through a private member's bill, and he shouldn't be allowed to get away with it.

With respect to the issue of transparency, Madam Speaker, it is a bit rich to hear private members of the government caucus talk about the need for more transparency around government finances when, in fact, my colleagues here in the Official Opposition have been trying ever since April 16, 2019, to get a modicum of transparency from this government on how it spends incredibly huge sums of money. To date we have no idea how much money was spent on the failed Keystone XL pipeline, and our repeated calls to get transparency on that issue have been rebuffed by the members opposite.

4:30

With respect to the \$30 million war room that continues to do nothing but embarrass the people of Alberta and provide nothing but high-paid jobs for failed UCP candidates, well, that's structured so that we can't even legally get transparency on it. It's structured as a private corporation that's not subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Absolutely ridiculous, Madam Speaker, and there's nothing in this bill that would require organizations like the war room to provide Albertans transparency on how that \$30 million is being spent.

I joined my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View during the Energy estimates. There's a line item in the Energy budget that talks about industry advocacy. My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View pressed the minister on what the \$19 million that was related to industry advocacy was being spent on, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Energy flat out refused to provide her an answer. Absolutely astounding that \$19 million would go out the door and that the minister, when asked in a public forum what she was spending it on, would refuse to provide an answer. It's incredibly frustrating that we are dealing now with this legislation to apparently provide transparency when at every turn the government has refused to provide transparency.

My friends in the Official Opposition and I have used a lot of the tools that are available to us as members of the Official Opposition to try to get increased transparency. One of those major tools is the Public Accounts Committee. We tried in February to get the Minister of Energy and her department to appear before us to talk about issues around coal mining. The Member for Livingstone-Macleod just stood up and adjourned the meeting before it even got started. We've repeatedly tried to get a number of important government ministries to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. Every time we've tried to get those departments before committee, members of the UCP caucus have voted down our suggestions and have worked overtime to make sure that the government can't be held to account by our own Legislature when it comes to how we spend our money. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Now, with respect to who this bill applies to and, more importantly, who it doesn't, the Member for Red Deer-South and his COVID-19 compatriot there from Lacombe-Ponoka talked about needing to inform individuals about . . .

**Mr. Schow:** That's a point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. I think it should come as no surprise that I'm rising on a point of order: implying false motives from the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka as being a COVID denier. The member said: joining his COVID-denying compadre from Lacombe-Ponoka. Check it, Madam Speaker.

I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, which would be, you know, maybe beyond his capacity, to raise the level of decorum in here and to retract the comments, to maybe get back to the contents of the bill, of which I've heard very little from him so far this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You have cautioned the member a few times here today already, but I think that certainly the member has been trying to speak to the substance of this bill

and has been trying to speak to the matters which affect this bill. I think that when we talk about how the issue of the conduct of members and caucuses in this place affects bills, it certainly affects it when we're talking about public service and transparency. I think this is a matter of debate. We encourage this member to continue and to be a little bit cautious in his comments.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** As mentioned in the comments, this is not the first time that the hon. member has been cautioned for being off topic in this current debate and, further to that, making this debate about members in this House and not about the bill. This is the third time in which we find ourselves here. There will not be a fourth time.

I will ask the hon. member to continue, with the cautions noted, with his debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, we heard a lot from the Member for Red Deer-South and the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on the issue of who this bill would apply to. Well, apparently, we can't even mention members who have spoken to the debate, I guess, but the important thing is that what they have stressed is that individual Albertans will allegedly be informed about the cost of public services.

What I'd like to see in this bill is Albertans informed as to what the cost of public services that are provided to corporations would be. Is there anything in this bill that would allow Albertans to see how much Suncor and CNRL and Cenovus benefit from our education system? I notice that they hire a lot of people who have gone through school, both elementary and high school, as well as advanced education here in Alberta. How much have they benefited from the public dollars that have been spent on that education that was provided to them? How much have they benefited from the provision of health care, free health care, to their workers, right?

How much have the people of Alberta subsidized those companies with? I would like to know how much they each individually made from the giant corporate tax cut that this government made. They made a \$4.9 billion corporate tax cut when they reduced the corporate tax rate from 12 per cent to 8 per cent. How much of that went to Suncor individually? How much of that went to CNRL individually? How much of that did go to Cenovus individually? How much did each corporation individually benefit from that \$4.9 billion tax cut? The people of Alberta want to know, Madam Speaker, but I don't think that that's the intent of the Member for Red Deer-South's bill.

We get a glimpse of some of the other subsidies that the government provides to these major corporations by looking through the government documents. You know, we get a hint of the property tax reductions that they get.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join in debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act. This is an important bill and a concept that has been talked about for a long time, and I'm glad to finally see something like this taking shape. Every election we hear promises from all sides regarding more transparency, in particular regarding the way tax dollars are spent, and rightly so.

The government serves at the pleasure of the public, something we must never forget. The government has a right in our system to impose taxes in exchange for services. Far too often, however, the

actual cost of these services is unclear. Citizens begin to wonder why their taxes are going up when they do not see any further benefit. It is one of our jobs as elected representatives to ensure that we are using those tax dollars responsibly. Further still, we should be able to explain clearly to the public where their money has gone and where it is going exactly. The budget is a vast document, and I would care to venture that there aren't too many taxpayers that would take the time to read it to find out the specifics about what money is going where in every department. We need to do better than expecting someone to browse through the massive document.

Some citizens believe that big government is a good thing, and they're not worried about transparency. Others believe that we need smaller government. On both sides what I hope can be agreed upon is that actually bringing forward transparency is for the good of those whom it represents.

4:40

As a government we have talked a lot about financial literacy, and it is important to society. It is not, however, just important for people to have literacy in this area in terms of their household finances, but it is critical that they also understand this in terms of how these taxpayer dollars are spent and how much programs cost.

New, shiny programs are another thing that is popular around election time. These are the things that sound great, but very rarely is the cost of these many programs explained to voters, and thus it is not understood. Similarly, because it isn't necessarily understood by many what the costs of services are, many people do not understand how much a program that they may be asking for will cost them and other taxpayers.

This is why I support this bill, Madam Speaker. It allows taxpayers to have this understanding and also allows them to hold us to account. Taxpayers' money does not belong to the government. This money is not ours to take and do whatever we want with. We often hear some describing the lowering of tax rates as a giveaway. This is strange to me. The government cannot give money away that it never collects in the first place. We must understand that every penny the government spends is either taken from the taxpayer to begin with or borrowed against future collections from taxpayers. To believe that not collecting tax is in some way a giveaway by the government is to think that an individual's money is going to the government to begin with.

Government and taxes do serve a purpose. As only one example of many, people and the economy in general require transportation infrastructure. Because this is a collective need, the government collects tax to provide that service. Where I think most of us differ in our opinion is on the size of each of those and how much is necessary. It is vital that it isn't just government making these decisions. Every four years in this province we have elections, where the citizens have a chance to generally tell the government about their priorities. This will be enhanced by our government's introduction of recall and citizens' initiatives. What will be important in all of this is that there is understanding of the cost of the direction and actions accepted by the electorate. This bill aims to create that understanding.

Over the past couple of decades there has been a discussion about the cost of visits to the emergency room versus visits to the doctor's office. Obviously, visiting an emergency department is more expensive, but many people will go there anyway. In 2015 a report was published by the Canadian Institute for Health Information which showed that the two most common reasons for emergency room visits were for upper respiratory infections such as a cold and the need for antibiotics, which in most cases are not life threatening. These visits made up 26 per cent of the visits. The question is: would people seek out a family doctor if they knew how much more

it was costing them in taxes to go to the emergency room for these issues? I believe that they would, and the costs associated with these visits are just one thing that this bill will focus light on. This is not just aimed at health care. This is aimed at all publicly funded services, things like the cost of K to 12 education, postsecondary education, municipal operating expenses, and so on.

I am sure that there are some concerns about whether this would increase costs by way of requiring there to be someone reporting these things. This bill also aims to address these concerns. We know that the organizations should, will, and do keep track of their expenses. It is simply a matter of reporting them to the public. This is not meant to be more red tape and to require separate newsletters or reports to go out to the public but simply adding it to what is already there.

We live in a digital age, where it is easier than ever to post information. I do not believe we are asking for anything here that isn't already on record internally. This bill simply seeks to make the information external for taxpayers to see and understand. This can also be done with a means by which communication is already done with taxpayers.

For example, municipalities send out tax assessments to property owners. A breakdown, of course, can be added to that same notice. One thing that I hope may also be done here is the requirement for landlords to pass this information on to their tenants. I think that often tenants feel like they do not pay taxes because they do not own the property, thereby making them feel disconnected to the need to be more aware of where the taxes end up. This, however, is not the case. They simply pay these taxes through rent, which the landowner is then charged by the government.

For K to 12 education parents receive report cards. The breakdown for education costs for their child can be reported on as part of that report card. In fact, it would be almost appropriate for parents to receive that in this way since taxpayers should have a right to receive report cards about how their money is spent. This is really what this is, Madam Speaker, a means by which a report card is issued to taxpayers so that they understand better how their hard-earned money is spent through taxing.

Again, this is about transparency, the thing that is so consistently campaigned on. I encourage my colleagues here in the Assembly to support this bill so that we can bring more awareness to public spending.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on Bill 209? The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on Bill 209. I think I was the first one who got up, so I think we're all good. I wanted to thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-South for his bill. I know that in the private members' business committee we got into this a little bit, but I'm happy to see that it has proceeded to the House and is receiving the debate that it deserves.

Madam Speaker, we know that Alberta offers some of the best public services in the world. We're very proud of that. Our nurses and doctors are among the highest paid in Canada as well as our teachers. I would just like to preface this by saying that we know that they work very hard and that they deserve the pay that they get, but it's also important to remember that taxpayers provide those funds and provide the ability to have such world-class public services.

Many taxpayers don't realize how governments distribute these funds. I truly believe, Madam Speaker, that that isn't by any fault of their own. This information is often very hard to find. Sometimes

you have to dig through *Hansard* or you have to find some obscure website to figure out exactly where these things are located. Even sometimes when you contact your MLA, there's a process there to find out these things ourselves, too, because some of this information just isn't readily posted.

Some of the options of things that we could be disclosing more readily are the costs per day for in-class learning. What is the cost of an emergency room visit? How much does an MRI or an X-ray cost? How much does, say, a hospital visit cost? How much does a cataract surgery – whatever. How much does that cost the taxpayer? Many Albertans call these services free. I know that when I listen to media from the south, we hear, you know, that Canada has free health care and that Canada has free whatever, but we know that nothing is really free. It is public health care, and we're proud of that. It is public services, and we are proud of those, but it isn't necessarily free, Madam Speaker, because the reality is that the government can't take what hasn't first been taken from taxpayers, so we can't be giving what we haven't first taken away in the first place.

Now, if more Albertans had the opportunity to see how their taxes paid for public services like health care and education or postsecondary or anything else in between, they might have a greater appreciation for those who provide them. It might perhaps dissuade too many trips to an emergency room for something that maybe doesn't need to go to an emergency room. Maybe somebody would say: okay; maybe I can wait till tomorrow. Of course, we wouldn't want to dissuade anyone from going for an emergency. It's just an example.

4:50

There may be more appreciation for the work that our educators do and our teachers do when they understand, you know, how much it does cost to run a classroom. Maybe they wouldn't ask so many questions, or maybe Albertans would understand better how much those services really cost. Postsecondary students themselves might even have a better understanding of just how much of their tuition the government subsidizes. I know that when I was in postsecondary, I had no idea. It wasn't something that I sought out either – I will say that – but perhaps it is something that we could find out as postsecondary students or that postsecondary could find out more readily through Bill 209.

Through Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act, we can provide that opportunity for Albertans to have the most information. We're proud of this, Madam Speaker, that unlike our neighbours to the south, Albertans will not receive a bill for their hospital and doctor visits. But, at the same time, Albertans will have no way and they do have no tangible way of knowing the value that we receive in Canada for these services, specifically in Alberta. If Bill 209 passes, everyone could receive a cost breakdown for any of these services. Also, municipalities would have to provide an account for their operating expenses with property tax assessments. I just heard the Member for Calgary-East, I think – yes, Calgary-East; I'm so sorry – talking about how renters can expect, you know, if their rent is going up. Well, maybe that's because property taxes are climbing through the roof. Governments need to be transparent in showing just exactly where that money is coming from.

Who hasn't looked at their taxes and thought, "What am I actually getting for the money that the government is taking off my paycheck?" Who hasn't thought, you know, "I should be paying less" or "I wish I could pay less" or "My goodness, this seems ridiculous"? I think that at any income bracket you can say that. Hopefully, Bill 209 could provide an answer to that question by allowing for greater transparency to Albertans on how public

services are spending their money. It will simultaneously keep governments more accountable and increase taxpayer awareness.

I know that I've heard from both sides of the House, in fact, Madam Speaker, that we should be more accountable. We should be more transparent. We should be telling Albertans, you know, what is going on in here. We should be telling Albertans what goes on behind closed doors. I think we totally agree with that. I totally agree with that, and I think that the Member for Red Deer-South is showing his commitment to transparency by putting forward this piece of legislation. I really do appreciate his effort on that and his willingness to be forthright even though it could be seen as controversial, but I don't think that transparency is anything that any government should fear. Transparency is the least that constituents should expect. Because of that, I will be supporting Bill 209, and I would encourage all of my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to support the Cost of Public Services Transparency Act.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to confirm, I have right until 5 o'clock. Is that right? Perfect. Awesome.

It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 209, Cost of Public Services Transparency Act. Madam Speaker, it's a little bit concerning that we're seeing this bill come forward at this time, because when we're talking about an economy which this government has led to tatters, when we're talking about a situation in which this province saw tens of thousands of jobs lost before this pandemic even began and we see tens of thousands more jobs lost as this continues, that instead of trying to bring forward legislation that will actually help put Albertans back to work, instead of bringing forward legislation that will actually allow Albertans to succeed and excel in the future, we're seeing, basically, a financial audit bill, which is going to create an additional bureaucratic step, create additional red tape, and doesn't sufficiently explain how it's different than some of the other mechanisms we already have, right?

Madam Speaker, this is something that was brought up when we talked to stakeholders, too, right? When we talked to stakeholders in the private members' bills committee, one of the things that we heard was that if, for example, somebody was to visit an emergency room or a nonurgent care centre and receive a procedure – let's say that a senior gets a knee replaced or something like that – it would be extraordinarily concerning if a senior received a bill in the mail or what appeared to be a bill in the mail. Indeed, it could be what the member described more as a receipt, but it's something that could be – in this modern day, where we already see so many scams occurring across the Internet and telephone scams, where we see so much already that is preying on Albertans, they might then receive from the government communications that would be misleading or communications that would be hard to interpret for an average Albertan.

I think it's very dangerous when we talk about this, when we already have processes like the Auditor General, when we already have processes that the member, having formerly been on the Treasury Board, should know about, and having this transparency that already exists. It's pretty concerning that we see this caucus move forward with this bill, that basically intends to take up additional time and resources of the government, that basically intends to take up additional time and resources of public service workers to create these redundant reports that may in fact be very difficult for the average Albertan to understand.

When we talk about these reportable costs, when we talk about these designated services, it's entirely vague what that actually means. The member himself, when he introduced this bill, actually spoke to that. He said: well, you know, it's all in regulation; not every service has been designated; it can change based on what the government sees in consultation and wants to bring forward. That's also very concerning. It's very concerning that basically we're bringing forward this bill without having done the proper consultation, without having done the proper work, and without having actually understood where the inefficiencies may lie or indeed where this may be effective or not effective. It basically says that we're giving the government a blank cheque to send these receipts or bills to Albertans without actually understanding the ramifications, how much it would cost to do this, where this might actually happen.

The member indicated, for example, that it might happen on report cards. Madam Speaker, that's something that's very strange. As many members here are former teachers, they know that from school board to school board, from school to school there's often different software that generates these report cards or reporting, so it could be very difficult to consolidate this information. Yet the member was unable to address any of that.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, welcome back.

I think that certainly it's something that's very difficult, when we're talking about this bill, to support because it simply is so broadly written and, as such, creates this burden and inefficiency and red tape on the government that it would be very difficult for any person in this House to support.

I think that when we look at the processes in place, we certainly support transparency. We certainly support having a system that holds the government accountable to Albertans. Many times that's why the opposition called on the government to do things like release the contracts they signed over KXL. How much money did this government lose? How much money did this government fail to disclose? How much of taxpayer dollars did they put on the line? Unfortunately, the government withheld all that information and didn't reveal that information. Those are the types of things I would have liked to have seen in this bill. Those are the types of disclosures I would have liked to see in the bill and that, I think, would have really broadened transparency. Instead, we see this red tape. Instead, we see this bureaucratic process and creation of extra burden, and I think that's something that's extraordinarily disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:58 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Schmidt
Irwin	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Getson	Luan	Schow
Glasgo	Madu	Singh
Glubish	McIver	Stephan
Goodridge	Orr	Turton
Gotfried	Pon	Walker
Guthrie	Reid	Wilson

Hunter	Rowswell	Yao
LaGrange	Rutherford	
Totals:	For – 6	Against – 23

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika on behalf of the hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

518. Mr. Schow moved on behalf of Mr. Williams:  
Be it resolved that

- A. the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective February 25, 2021, be amended
- (a) in Standing Order 29 by striking out suborder (2), and
  - (b) by adding the following after Standing Order 29:
 

Intervention

29.1(1) A Member may, in accordance with this Standing Order, intervene during another Member's speech on any item of debate referred to in Standing Order 29(1) except if the speech is one of the following:

    - (a) a Member's opening or closing speech in respect of moving a resolution or a Bill;
    - (b) a Member's speech immediately following an opening speech referred to in clause (a);
    - (c) a Member's speech on a motion for an address in reply to the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

(2) A Member may request to intervene during another Member's speech by rising while that Member is speaking.

(3) If a Member requests to intervene, the Member who is speaking may, immediately on the other Member rising

    - (a) agree to the request by
      - (i) acknowledging the Member's request,
      - (ii) stating that they agree to the request, and
      - (iii) taking their seat, or
    - (b) refuse the request by continuing with their speech.

(4) If a Member agrees to a request to intervene

    - (a) the Member's speaking time is immediately suspended until the intervention concludes,
    - (b) the Member who intervenes
      - (i) is limited to a speaking time of one minute, and
      - (ii) may only ask questions or make comments on matters relevant to the speech on which they have intervened,
    - (c) no Member, including the Member whose speech is the subject of the intervention, may request to intervene during the intervention, and
    - (d) on conclusion of the intervention, the Member whose speech was the subject of

- the intervention may resume speaking for the remainder of their speaking time.
- (5) If a Member refuses a request to intervene
    - (a) the Member may continue speaking for the remainder of their speaking time, and
    - (b) the Member who made the request must immediately take their seat.
  - (6) A Member may not agree to more than five interventions during their speech.
  - (7) For greater certainty, a Member may make multiple requests to intervene in another Member's speech.
  - (8) Despite any other suborder under this Standing Order, the Speaker may direct any Member as is necessary to preserve order and decorum during a debate.
- B. the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing
- (a) conduct a review of the amendments set out in Part A within one year of the day on which these amendments come into force, and
  - (b) table a report in the Assembly on that review, which may include any amendments recommended by the committee, within 365 days of the day on which the standing committee commences its review.
- C. the amendments set out in Part A come into force on passage of this motion.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good to see you. It is my honour to introduce and move Motion 518 on behalf of the hon. Member for Peace River.

The junior Senator from Nebraska was elected on November 4, 2014. However, Senator Sasse did not deliver his maiden speech from the Senate floor until one full year later, on November 4, 2015. He waited before speaking. What he said was worth the wait. One line I wish to pull from his speech is his response to whether he's calling for more civility in the Senate and in politics. The Senator declared in his answer:

No. While I'm in favor of more civility, my actual call here is for more substance.

[There] is not a call for less fighting . . .

It is a call for a more meaningful fight.

. . . This is a call for bringing our A-game to the [biggest] debates [about] the biggest issues . . . [facing our people], with [much] less regard for [elections and news cycles]. This is a call to be for [something] big enough that you might risk your reelection.

I rise today on behalf of my colleague the Member for Peace River to move this Motion 518. Like the member himself, this motion is unusual. It is not like most motions other than government motions the Chamber sees, where the Assembly broadcasts our legislative will on matters of provincial importance or relevance. Instead, this motion amends our laws, not provincial statutes but the procedural laws that govern Alberta's Legislature, Mr. Speaker, our standing orders.

To clarify the mechanics for my colleagues, the effect of the amendment is to replace our Standing Order 29(2)(a) with 29.1, giving members the ability to intervene in the member's speech while under way. When a hopeful intervenor makes his or her intention to ask a question by rising to their feet and catching the eye of the debater, the debating member who currently holds the floor has the right to accept or refuse the intervention. If accepted, the debater gives way to the intervenor for the pointed but relevant question before returning to his or her feet and continuing with their remaining time. This would allow for members to engage directly

and immediately, confronting and clashing with opposing views. It would allow for exchanges between members on substantive issues and to propose legislation. Genuine debate is why Albertans sent us to this Chamber.

If passed, we would not be the only parliament in the Westminster system to have interventions. The original Parliament has them as well. Though this amendment is similar to the U.K. interventions, it is unique to Alberta by preserving the five minutes that is used for questions and comments under 29(2)(a) for five one-minute interventions.

The reason for moving this motion is not Anglophilic in origin though the Member for Peace River and I do share a love for the Mother Parliament. It is because, as the great Irish parliamentarian Edmund Burke said in 1774, "Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest: that of the whole; where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole." Our Legislature is meant to be a place where our province holds its provincial debate, where the debate of laws that will govern every Albertan is scrutinized and the general good is produced from the general reason of the whole. Put plainly, this body should be addressing our province's biggest problems, shepherding our provincial debate through those problems, and producing solutions for everyday Albertans.

But do everyday Albertans believe that that is what we do here at the Legislature? Unfortunately, I think every member in this Chamber has once heard the opposite when back in their constituencies. Often with the hue of the partisan colour of their choice, we hear that everyday Albertans do not believe this institution is where serious debate is being held. Don't misunderstand me, however. I believe we, opposition and government members alike, do important work contributing to the good for Albertans. However, increasingly the public opinion of many Albertans indicates that they do not take the work we do as MLAs all the time as serious, and that is unfortunate.

5:20

To be sure, there are many reasons for this depreciation. This body cannot address all of them, and this motion and this speech can address even fewer, but we can correct, however modest, whatever we should. This is not a partisan motion, Mr. Speaker. It is also not a government motion. The Member for Peace River has worked hard with his colleagues to try to convince them that we owe Albertans the ability to elevate debate. All parties, Conservative and New Democrat, all members, front bench and back, have a shared interest in our Assembly addressing our biggest issues honestly and directly.

In writing about the collapse of trust in our institutions, Yuval Levin, an Israeli-American author, describes institutions, including ones like our Legislature, as formative for those who pass through them. The institution, its culture, its procedures, and its people shape us and form us. However, Levin continues on to tell us that in the United States, quote, a lot of members of Congress have come to view the institution as a kind of platform for themselves, as a way to raise their profile to become celebrities in the world of cable news or talk radio; in essence, to perform. That's their core understanding of what the job is, and what's lost in the process is the capacity to legislate, to deliberate, to compromise. Members come to see themselves as players in a larger political ecosystem, the point of which is not legislating or governing but a kind of performative outrage for a partisan audience that's asking them to put on a show. End quote.

Levin articulates what so many of us see and dread in modern politics, a disconnecting from our shared political past, transforming

our beloved institutions from formative to performative, no longer debating but displaying. There is likely unanimous agreement, on both sides of this House, that Canada has not reached this point in our civil discourse and that we don't want to move the Alberta Legislature closer to the cousins in the south. However, we cannot deny that the slow creeping of our provincial political institution towards the stage of performance is concerning if it truly is foreshadowing the impending circus show that follows.

Bluntly put, our job is not a performance. It must be to debate and to pass legislation, or we will join the spectacle. If we as a legislative body want to maintain the institution we have inherited, it rests on us to cultivate our love of debate and to enshrine in our procedures orders that allow us to address Alberta's biggest issues as Albertans expect us to, directly, honestly, and with conviction. Procedure should be used to encourage sober deliberation and allow for genuine confronting of opposing views. Similarly, debate should not be used as a blunt tool to impede government progress with inane diatribes no matter the content. Instead, debate should be used as iron sharpens iron, pressing for better answers and sharpening legislators and legislation in the process, not the squeezing of timelines.

In closing, in his maiden speech Senator Sasse delivers an anecdote in performance politics, hyperpartisan attacks, and the narcissism prevailing from American politics in what has become the age of Trump and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "We should be bored by lazy 'politician speech.'" "We have nothing to fear from honest differences honestly [shared, for] I believe a greater clarity between us can lead to a greater [clarity] among us."

The Member for Peace River and these government benches recognize that these are big generational problems to address, and he recognizes that this amendment will not necessarily address them all. It may be that upon review of the standing order change under part B of this motion, the decision is to find another way to improve how we debate. Motion 518 is just an honest attempt from one member, stating his views that we owe it to all Albertans, who sent us here, to bring our A game to our debate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to please vote in support of Motion 518. Thank you.

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

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted.

#### **Point of Order Admissibility of Motion**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, I rise on a point of order. On page 603 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, under Motion that a Member Be Now Heard:

When two Members rise simultaneously to "catch the Speaker's eye", the Speaker will recognize one of them to speak. By rising on a point of order, another Member may move that the Member who had not been recognized be given the floor . . . [The moving of the] motion that a Member "be now heard" is an exception to the rule that a motion cannot be moved on a point of order. The motion may not be moved if the Member first recognized by the Speaker has already begun to speak.

I rise at this time to make this motion pursuant to this practice.

This practice is further described:

A recorded division may take place . . . the motion [clearly] cannot be moved . . . if the Member named in the motion did not originally rise to be recognized.

However, as you saw and I'm sure the video record of this place will show, two members, my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud, did indeed rise, and neither had begun to speak.

I'll also note that in the House of Commons on October 29, 1999, the Acting Speaker Thibeault ruled that so long as a member had not already spoken to a motion, a member's motion – in this case Motion 518 was already . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I appreciate the interjection. I'd like you to yield when the Speaker rises as I have a question with respect to the point of order. I'm hoping that you can direct me to, in the standing orders, the reference that you're making. I know that there are a number of occasions in which we use *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* for guidance with respect to procedures of the House, but I'm hoping that you'll be able to make the – as you know, we are the masters of our own domain with respect to the rulings, so if you can help by providing some additional context, I'd appreciate that. Please proceed with your point of order.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you may, I believe that if you'll refer to the standing orders under motions that may be made, we do see that there are motions – excuse me; I just need to flip very quickly here. Certainly, I believe that there are motions that are in order at all times, and certainly motions that refer to the order of business are in order at all times. I just need to find the exact reference there. However, I will note that in multiple cases we have seen rulings on this. It is certainly in order for us to make decisions on what the proceedings of this place are going to be, as you had just stated in your own words here, Mr. Speaker. I certainly believe that when we move forward under Standing Order 43, which is motions receivable during debate – when we look at these motions, we can see 43(f), “to proceed to another order” – we do have the ability to proceed to and decide on our own business.

Now, as I'll continue, Mr. Speaker, such a motion to now be heard is in order, and we saw this reaffirmed by Acting Speaker Barry Devolin in the House of Commons on April 2, 2014, on a question of whether the Member for Louis-Saint-Laurent or the Member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore should be heard. Of course, on May 9, 2012, Speaker Scheer in the House of Commons also had a similar motion raised on a question of whether the Member for Acadie-Bathurst or the Member for Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine had managed to catch the Speaker's eye first. That question was decided, on *Hansard* page 1525, in the House of Commons on a division by Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with this procedure, that is well outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and, certainly, as it is allowable in this place for us to move motions which do indeed determine the order in which we are debating business, I would move that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood now be heard.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's highly irregular – and I find it unusual – that the Member for Edmonton-South, I believe it is, would want to interject and begin debating another motion given that we are currently on Motion 518. I'm not sure what the member is afraid of, but in response to his point of order I don't understand where this has been used in precedents in Alberta. I didn't hear that in his remarks though I know he referenced some other precedents. I don't see how this motion that he is moving is in order, and I encourage you to rule against it. We'd like to continue on debate on Motion 518.

5:30

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the interjections from both members. I would provide some comments for the hon. Deputy Official Opposition House Leader that this procedure that members now be heard is not a procedure that is used inside the Alberta context, so this isn't a point of order. I would also point the hon. member to Standing Order 2, procedure in unprovided-for cases.

In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by the Speaker and, in making a ruling, the Speaker shall base any decision on the usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition.

I have just stated that this isn't a question that is heard inside the Alberta Legislature. It's not within our standing orders.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

### Debate Continued

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 8(4) I would move that the motion under consideration be moved to the bottom of that item of business on the Order Paper.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to move Motion Other than Government Motion 518 to the bottom of the Order Paper lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Nielsen	Schmidt
Irwin	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.

Against the motion:

Getson	LaGrange	Schow
Glasgo	Madu	Singh
Glubish	Orr	Turton
Goodridge	Pon	Walker
Gotfried	Reid	Wilson
Guthrie	Rowswell	Yao
Hunter	Rutherford	

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 20
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[Motion to move Motion Other than Government Motion 518 to the bottom of the Order Paper lost]

**The Speaker:** I would like to provide some additional comments with respect to the point of order as earlier raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South. I appreciate his keenness with which to quote *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, so while he is continuing to do additional research, I hope that he will read page 603, chapter 13, Rules of Order and Decorum, Usual Order of Speaking.

There is no official order for the recognition of speakers laid down in the Standing Orders; the Chair relies on the practice and precedents of the House in this regard.

He'll know that that was not the precedent which he used earlier.

The Standing Orders simply authorize the Speaker to recognize for debate any Member who seeks the floor by rising in his or her place. The Member who is “seen” first is accorded the right to speak. This is commonly referred to as “catching the Speaker's eye.”

I will proceed down to the bottom of page 604, where it says: While the Speaker has complete discretion in recognizing Members.



And for good measure, because I know he's sharpening up on his skills, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 461, List of Members Desiring to Speak:

Officially there is no list of Members desiring to speak in debate. Any Member who wishes to speak may rise and endeavour to catch the Speaker's eye. The Member who is seen first has the right to speak.

And 462:

While the Speaker is the final authority on the order of speaking in the House, and on occasion has used independent judgment.

It was very clear to me that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud caught my eye, in which she was recognized. There is no need for a point of order.

Is there anyone that would like to join in the debate? The hon. member . . .

5:50

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

### Point of Order Speaking Time

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud still has approximately nine minutes remaining of debate. Certainly, I had confirmed earlier that after such motions had been made, time would be continued after votes and divisions.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader, if you have comments to add.

**Mr. Madu:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my assessment, the moment the Speaker ruled on the point of order that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-South and given the nature of that particular point of order, that brings that particular matter to a conclusion and therefore the Speaker is within his right to recognize any other member that rises to speak on the motion. Therefore, it is my view that this is not a point of order.

**The Speaker:** I do appreciate the interjection from the hon. Deputy Government House Leader. To provide some context with respect to speaking order, following a Standing Order 8(4), I believe it is, earlier in this parliamentary session the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika had risen, raised a similar motion under Standing Order 8(4), concluded his remarks, a vote was taken, and the Assembly did not return to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika for him to continue with any additional remarks. As I consider this to be a dilatory motion, as such, that would conclude the remarks. It is separate from, say, an adjournment, which is a nondilatory motion moved. But if you give me 30 seconds, I will take a quick moment to confer with the table to ensure that my ruling is correct.

### Debate Continued

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

**Ms Goodridge:** I am honoured to stand today . . .

**Mr. Dang:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been called. The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Under Standing Order 13(2) . . .

**The Speaker:** No. I just told you what my ruling was. Earlier in this session the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika had the exact same situation, and that's how it was ruled. Unless you have another question about the ruling that is not – you can't just call a 13(2) because you disagree. This is . . .

**Mr. Madu:** Correct.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, I appreciate your interjections, but I don't need your support.

**Mr. Dang:** I have another clarification.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 13(2) I appreciate that perhaps you have ruled that the member loses the remainder of that time. Does that also mean that because the motion under 8(4) was moved at the beginning of the speech, the remaining time is now lost and the member is no longer able to speak to this motion in the future as well? Is that . . .

**The Speaker:** Yes, because they moved a superseding motion or a dilatory motion. It's as though you've moved an amendment. You don't get to stand up and speak to another amendment at an additional time when you've moved the amendment.

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

**Ms Goodridge:** I'm honoured to stand here today and speak to Motion 518. It's really interesting, Mr. Speaker. This motion is a motion that I believe would strengthen debate that occurs in this Chamber and add to the decorum in the House. Today's antics clearly demonstrate that this is something that the opposition is afraid of and therefore tells me that this is more important now than it was when we started this debate. It really does encourage and strengthen our ability to represent our constituents' views and concerns.

It's critically important to remember that the history of our system, the Westminster parliamentary system, has developed to place limits on the ability of the monarch to arbitrarily create or raise taxes. The entire process as to why this was created was simply to create some regulations around that, and it was our first step towards creating a responsible democratic government in the history of our system. The Westminster parliamentary system has then developed significantly since those early days and has evolved over time in every different jurisdiction where it exists, and we have adopted many rules and conventions that conduct the parliament and parliamentarians that are elected. As such, we've heard from many of the different parliamentary resources that we have at our disposal to help us in conducting our debates.

It's really interesting. The mechanism of a 29(2)(a), as it has become known in Alberta's system, is unique to Alberta. It was created in approximately, like, the mid-2000s, 2005, 2006, by the former PC government as a mechanism, and it was supposed to be similar to the intervention in the U.K. parliamentary system as well as to some of the systems that existed in Ottawa. The reason why I bring this up is because this is relatively new in the scope of parliamentary democracy. This is a relatively new system that was brought in. While it served a very good purpose initially, I believe that it isn't serving the purpose that it was brought in to do, which is to make sure that we're constantly improving and holding decorum up within this Chamber.

Our function as Members of the Legislative Assembly has evolved substantially over time and can now be summarized to the statement that we must best represent the views of our constituents

on any issue that comes before the House for debate and throughout the entire process. Motion 518: not only does it strengthen our ability to represent our constituents by improving the dialogue and debate that can occur within this House, but it allows for more debate. It allows for those interventions where one member can ask a clarifying question. It also will allow for more dynamic debates, where questions can then be addressed in a more immediate fashion than is currently possible in our current system. By amending Standing Order 29 to allow for these interventions, true debate will actually be able to occur and flourish in this House in the same way it does in the United Kingdom and many other systems throughout the world. Our ability to respond to specific elements of a speech at the time they arise will give members the ability to seek clarifications when and where it is needed for clarity's sake.

So many times in this Chamber as a member is delivering a speech, I will have questions that have come into my mind, and this gives us a great opportunity to really clarify in the moment what

that speaker is trying to get at, to, within the parameters of the system, make sure that we understand what our hon. colleagues are raising so that we can understand the views of their constituents and where they're coming from.

Further, this would allow for a challenge on a statement or a fact to be raised immediately, which would then ensure that the content of the speech remained thoughtful and relevant to the legislation at hand at all times. Further, it would allow us as members to highlight key views or concerns of our constituents as related to a speech, which is the fundamental role we members were elected to fulfill.

Mr. Speaker, this is such a critically important idea . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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