



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 26, 2021

Day 104

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 3

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, please note that there have been modifications to the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotation as a result of changes to the composition of the caucuses of the Assembly, as indicated in my memo of May 21, 2021. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who now sits as an independent, is entitled to one question per week starting with question 8 on day 2 of the Oral Question Period rotation, which is today, and he is allocated one member's statement every three weeks starting on day 113, as indicated in the projected sitting day calendar. The Member for Central Peace-Notley may also ask one question per week, which is question 8 on day 3 of the Oral Question Period rotation. This member is entitled to one member's statement during a three-week rotation, and that will occur on day 105, which is tomorrow.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Early Childhood Educators

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, May 21, we celebrated Early Childhood Educator Day. Every day Alberta parents rely on enthusiastic, passionate, and dedicated educators to provide our children with safe, high-quality care. The government of Alberta recognizes the significant role early childhood educators play in not only caring for our children but investing in their early learning, growth, and development. We know that a child's early years are a crucial time for framing the future. Early childhood educators pave that path with knowledge, fun, and creativity that helps shape, build, and nurture the skills our children will use for a lifetime.

We know this past year of COVID-19 has brought many challenges to our everyday lives, yet through a time of adversity and uncertainty these educators have displayed dedication and resilience time and time again in service to our kids. They have faithfully shown up throughout the pandemic to care for our children and ensure parents can continue to go to work or school with the peace of mind that comes from knowing their kids are being well cared for, protected, and prepared for their future.

I had the opportunity and, frankly, the tremendous honour, Mr. Speaker, to lead consultations within Children's Services last year on the ministry regulations, which afforded me the occasion to meet many of the early childhood educators right across our great province. I was so impressed with the calibre of these caring people and their passion to invest in our children and to strive for excellence in all they do, from the physical space they create for the programs they offer to the care they extend to our kids to the dedication they display in setting up our children to thrive.

Early childhood educators represent a strong foundation in children's lives and development, and today I want to express my sincere thanks, our collective sincere thanks, for all they do to support Alberta's children, youth, families, and communities. Mr.

Speaker, from the bottom of my heart to early childhood educators everywhere, I say thank you.

COVID-19 Response

Member Ceci: This third wave has been difficult for so many Albertans, as this entire pandemic has been. Our ICUs have never been more full. We have lost friends, families, and neighbours. Over 2,000 Albertans have lost their lives, and many, many more face the repercussions of recovery and the threat posed by long COVID. But in the midst of all this struggle and suffering Albertans have risen to the challenge: following public health orders, wearing masks, physically distancing, and getting vaccinated. Truly, as we climb out of this third wave, it's the everyday Albertans who have done their part who deserve the credit for getting us out of this pandemic.

But while Albertans should pat themselves on the back for their sacrifice and extend their thanks to the front-line heroes who have put their health on the line to protect lives and keep Albertans safe, they do not owe an ounce of credit to the weak, contradictory, and ultimately failed leadership of this Premier and this UCP government. The Premier, who repeatedly dismissed the risks of COVID-19, telling this House that COVID was an influenza, claiming that homeless Albertans were immune and that young people are rarely affected, deserves no credit for the sacrifices that Albertans went through.

The Premier who undermined public health orders by standing up for the right of his caucus to dismiss health orders rather than standing up for the health care workers who begged for support, the Premier who claims we don't need paid sick leave, the Premier who claims he's done enough to support businesses even as they tell him that he's barely lifted a finger and won't even return their calls, the Premier who claims to want to keep schools open but won't invest a dime to support them and has shut them down three times, the Premier who acted last and acted least and whose failed leadership led Alberta to having the largest number of active cases in North America doesn't get to take credit for the work and sacrifices of Alberta families.

I am proud of what Albertans are doing and that they are doing what's necessary to keep their families, friends, and neighbours safe. That's the most Albertan thing I can think of. I just wish that this government had decided to follow their example.

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

Energy Industry Environmental, Social, and Governance Standards

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Climate change is not a belief system; it is a very real threat to our livelihoods and is front and centre for the energy industry in our province, the same industry that has employed hundreds of thousands and contributed to the nation's finances. Recently news stories about investor decisions have highlighted the critical importance of environmental, social, and governance, or ESG. Several years ago no one was contemplating ESG from an investment perspective, but they sure are now. It is clear that ESG has become a key priority to government and industry alike. Investors are truly looking for sustainable development.

This is why it is imperative that we highlight and promote our government's commitment to ESG standards and emission reductions. It is clear that if we want to achieve a larger market share, we must effectively communicate our world-class environmental standards in comparison to other oil-producing

nations. Alberta has a proud history of balancing our economic needs with the well-being of our indigenous partners and environmental protections in our own backyard, and it's time that we became loud and proud about it.

Developments in blue hydrogen, for example, have been encouraging. Recently a regional hydrogen hub was established in Edmonton, as a partnership between all levels of government and indigenous leaders, to attract investment into a sector with enormous potential for Alberta. It demonstrates our commitment to responsible policy and shows the international investment market that Alberta means business.

But that's not all. Industry all over Alberta is finding innovative new ways to produce and use energy. Agriculture is a key example. If you like steak and potatoes, boy, are you going to love biogas. It's this kind of creativity, built upon the backbone of Alberta's traditional industries, that investors are looking for. We must do everything possible to create the most attractive and competitive business environment.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 Draft Curriculum

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of Alberta school boards, 99 per cent of Alberta teachers, countless other parents, students, and future employers have given this Premier's bogus curriculum a failing grade. The outcry is deafening, and all who care about students and their futures are begging this Premier to engage in a proper consultation with Albertans. This Premier built his curriculum in secret, relying on the advice of his friends, who have questionable views and very little credibility with something this important.

Alberta's NDP believes fully that we need a new curriculum. Conservative governments of the past stalled on building the new material for decades. Today some of what is taught in our schools predates the development of the modern computer. Shameful. But Albertans also want a say. They want a seat at the table where it's decided what their kids will learn.

I was proud as Minister of Education to build a curriculum in collaboration with Albertans. During work on this we engaged with more than 40,000 Albertans across the province. We invited teachers, indigenous leaders, future employers, and so many more to be in working groups that actually helped to write the curriculum. If we had gone forward, some of that material for students in kindergarten to grade 4 would already be in a pilot phase, helping students to learn today.

Sadly, this Premier put politics first and promised to toss the curriculum into the shredder. It's one of the only promises that he actually followed through on. But now the groundswell of opposition to this Premier proves that he was wrong. His curriculum is backwards looking, inadequate, and downright hateful in spots. To the Premier, I say this to you: when you have been soundly rejected by Albertans, I will be proud to work with my colleagues and all Albertans on a curriculum that will enjoy broad support.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge on what I believe to be a very auspicious day for you.

An Hon. Member: Happy birthday.

Mr. Toor: Thank you.

School Reopening

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of virtually visiting Ms Fox's grades 5 and 6 class at

Monsignor A.J. Hetherington elementary school in Coral Springs northeast. While I was disappointed that I could not visit the students in person, we needed to ensure the safety of our students. I applaud and thank all teachers, school administrators, and support staff for doing everything possible to preserve the health and safety of our students.

The students had some excellent questions, from asking why I decided to enter politics to what a typical day looks like in the Legislature. Ms Fox's students were eager to learn more about life inside the Legislature. That eagerness and curiosity for knowledge was so inspiring and encouraging to witness because this is the spark we need as our youth become our future leaders. These young elementary students are indeed our best resource for a bright and prosperous future for Alberta, Canada, and the world. As leaders we have a duty to provide a foundation that supports the next generation so that they can be more successful than those before them.

We all know the last 15 months have been incredibly difficult, especially for students. The constant back and forth between attending school in person and online has been frustrating for everyone. It's difficult enough to learn new subject material like the quadratic formula or the history of the fur trade without having to deal with COVID-19. However, despite these difficult times students, like in Ms Fox's class, have shown tremendous resiliency. This week was the first week back in the classroom for many students, and I'm glad students can finish the school year alongside their classmates and teachers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Citadel Mews Seniors' Residence Fire in St. Albert

Ms Renaud: Thursday, May 6, will be a night singled into the memories of so many who were affected by the fire at the Citadel Village senior living complex in St. Albert. Even though the horrific blaze left more than a hundred seniors displaced, it galvanized the city into taking action to protect one another in a heartwarming display of community connection and resilience.

What started as a small blaze on the ground floor patio quickly spread into the evening's gusty winds, climbing the siding and engulfing the attic of the four-storey assisted and independent living building. It was a nightmare scenario: a fast-moving fire, blustery winds, and more than a hundred residents, many with mobility issues, needing to be evacuated with urgency. Stories have emerged about local teenagers and other community members running into the burning building, banging on doors in an effort to get everyone out. One said that he carried an elderly woman down four flights of stairs. This was a massive and difficult evacuation. Citadel Mews West is just one part of the Citadel Village. An additional 125 long-term care beds needed to be evacuated, with no power lifts or elevators. Many of these residents are unable to walk or even lift themselves out of bed. It is a testament to the professionalism of the staff at the Citadel care centre, Alberta Health Services, the St. Albert RCMP, and all of the residents.

Thankfully, all of the residents were evacuated in less than 45 minutes according to news reports. Firefighters arrived promptly, but it was quickly apparent that this was one of the biggest structure fires St. Albert had ever seen, and reinforcements were called in from surrounding communities, including Edmonton, Morinville, Strathcona county, and Spruce Grove. We are so fortunate to be part of a collaborative region. I extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to our neighbouring communities, who helped us when we needed it the most. It is truly a miracle that no lives were lost that night.

Thank you.

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

Fiscal Policies and Economic Recovery

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many in this province and especially in my constituency, I'm a conservative. In particular, I'm a fiscal conservative. Along with my fellow UCP MLAs I ran on a platform to restore balance to the budget and bring Alberta's finances under control while increasing economic activity. However, as we all know, the best laid plans of mice and men. No one saw the pandemic ahead, and no one anticipated the collapse in energy prices. What this led to is government financial support being required at the very time that government revenues were also falling. Now, it is only the need to keep the economy going, getting people back to work, and taking care of the vulnerable during the realities of COVID that explain why we have taken on the debt that we have.

In spite of these realities we remain committed to balancing our budget and starting to pay off our debt by creating the most efficient government in Canada and by growing the Alberta economy. Some of the steps we have taken over the past two years are starting to bear fruit. The job-creation tax cut has made Alberta one of the best places in North America to do business. We broke records in venture capital investment in 2020, and 2021 is shaping up to be even better. Businesses from around the world are setting up shop in Alberta. InfoSys expanded into Calgary, bringing 500 immediate jobs and an additional 1,500 jobs over the next three years. Once the Rogers and Shaw application is approved, thousands of new jobs will again be created. I was surprised to find out that there are now more head offices in Calgary than before the pandemic, many in the energy sector. The Conference Board of Canada is projecting that Alberta will lead the nation in economic growth at 6.4 per cent for the 2021 year.

As conservatives we will continue to grow the economy and create an efficient government and find solutions to the debt and build a path to its repayment, just as promised.

Toll Roads and Bridges

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, in the last election the UCP promised they would never bring in toll roads, but that turned out to be just another broken promise. Last fall they passed legislation to allow toll roads on bridges. They started with a toll bridge in La Crête, but now they have their sights on Deerfoot Trail in Calgary. When it comes to putting a toll on the Deerfoot, the UCP are once again being dishonest and playing word games with Calgarians.

When asked about tolls on the QE II last fall, the Transportation minister said that there won't be tolls on existing lanes, but new lanes could be subject to tolls. Well, guess what? When asked more recently about a toll specifically on the Deerfoot, he said that they won't be on existing infrastructure, which means a new lane on the Deerfoot could be subject to a toll. It just so happens that part of the UCP's plan to upgrade Deerfoot includes the addition of a lane from downtown to the airport, and the mayor of Calgary has said that the existing budget for the project won't cover all the planned upgrades. This can only mean one thing, Mr. Speaker: tolls are coming to Calgary's roads. Worst of all, they will come at a time when Albertans are already paying more under this government: more property taxes, income taxes, auto insurance, utilities, and camping fees. All of these have gone up while profitable corporations get billions of dollars in handouts with nothing to show for it.

Now the UCP are forcing Albertans to pay for their failure as a government and punishing people just for driving to work. Meanwhile, a project that will reduce congestion on our roads, support Calgary's economy, and create 20,000 jobs continues to sit on the minister's desk. If the UCP really cared about getting people

to work and cutting costs for Albertans, they would scrap their toll plans and build the green line.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Cross.

COVID-19 Vaccines

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 pandemic has long impacted the way that we live our lives, affecting our personal lives and devastating countless businesses. Fortunately, we live in an age of unparalleled science and technology. Pharmaceutical companies across the world have worked to create an effective vaccine that will help push us past the COVID-19 pandemic and resume our lives.

Mr. Speaker, these vaccines are a modern miracle, an incredible example of medical innovation and a true demonstration of how the world has come together to solve a threat that does not discriminate. Vaccinations have been around for a long time. They are safe and effective. These COVID vaccines are no different. We have seen real and verifiable statistics showing the effectiveness of our COVID-19 vaccination program, with serious infection and death coming down each week. All of these vaccines, no matter the brand, no matter the type, have proven to reduce severe illness and death significantly.

Mr. Speaker, like all vaccinations, COVID-19 vaccines were carefully developed and tested to ensure their safety. These vaccines have been thoroughly tested by Canada's best medical experts and deemed safe, so Albertans should not hesitate to receive one when they become available. In fact, vaccines remain one of the clearest ways to recovery in our province.

To those who do have concerns, adverse effects associated with these vaccines are incredibly rare, with only 0.01 per cent of doses administered in this province having any negative effects at all. These statistics prove that vaccines are a safe tool in the fight against COVID-19.

We are so close. We are almost there. The future is bright, and the troubling time of the global pandemic is hopefully coming to an end. I encourage all Albertans to schedule an appointment for the vaccine, to follow the public health measures, and to stay safe so that we can get back to normal.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Reopening Plan

Ms. Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our province is now coming out of this devastating third wave thanks to the very hard work of Albertans. We've come a long way from four weeks ago, when the Premier claimed in this House that health measures don't help stop the virus. Now, while I am cautiously optimistic, I do have questions about how the Premier arrived at his benchmarks, the ones announced today, which are lower and much more aggressive than other provinces by a month or two months in some cases. To the Premier: will he please table in this House the scientific evidence he used to make the decisions announced today?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is that the framework for Alberta's open summer comes from the public health advice that we have received from Dr. Hinshaw and her team at Alberta Health following careful analysis of the impact of vaccination and other measures in jurisdictions right around the

world. I will point out to the Leader of the Opposition that some jurisdictions opened completely at 15 per cent vaccination coverage, and the numbers have continued to drop. We're talking about 70 per cent, one of the highest levels of population protection in the world for a reopening strategy.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did a scan of B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec's reopening plans, and there are some major differences from ours. Their vaccination benchmarks are higher, and they wait three weeks after key thresholds to ensure the vaccine has had time to provide protection. Here: faster. Ontario has indoor dining with restrictions not until the very end of July. Here: wide open, no restrictions, a month or more earlier. Quebec's limit on festivals doesn't lift until the end of August. Here it's the end of June. To the Premier: why is it that he thinks that Alberta can be so out of step with the scientific evidence in other provinces?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is not committed to scientific evidence. They're committed to their ideological desire to lock down this society, as they have been from day one. They wanted the schools closed. They wanted most businesses closed. It would've been a catastrophe if they had been given, with their propensity for government overreach, control over our society during this extraordinary time. What she's saying is wrong because we're measuring the population by everybody who is 12 and above. Most of those provinces are taking adults 18 and above. So our 70 per cent threshold is on a larger population. We also have a larger second-dose administration than other provinces.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the deeply insulting allegations of the Justice minister a couple of weeks ago and the ridiculous assertions just made by the Premier, the fact is that we don't want this to go on forever. What we do want is to avoid another round 4 of this Premier sprinting us into another wave because his political vulnerability is more important than the vulnerability of our health system. This does not look like an evidence-based plan. It looks like the Premier is working backwards from the stampede. Will the Premier please provide us with the scientific evidence that justifies his decision? He mentioned it. Table it in the House if he's got it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker. We've done so. In fact, the framework for this plan, with the recommendation coming forward from the experts at Alberta Health, is based on a careful analysis of population protection across the world. Other jurisdictions, the United Kingdom and Israel, that reached 50 per cent coverage on their first doses have seen numbers continue to fall through the floor. U.S. states that opened at 15 per cent first dose coverage have seen the virus come dramatically under control. The real question is: why does the NDP want to prevent Albertans from having their normal lives back, from having a great summer?

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

Ms Notley: The real question is: why will the Premier not table the evidence he just talked about?

Paid Sick Leave during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms Notley: Now, we know that even as we reopen, COVID-19 will stay us. That's why the Premier's reopening plan still has 14-day isolation protocols. The CMO herself has said that the first dose will reduce the severity of symptoms and bring down cases, but it will not eliminate the cases. As such, we can expect that as measures are

relaxed, cases will continue. Premier, if we really want to be open for summer, you have to give workers the ability to afford to stay home when they get sick. Why won't you do that?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have provided the most generous support for people who are not just sick but those who also have to self-isolate because they are the close contacts of those who are ill. We've done so with not just cash but also free room and board, a total package worth about \$2,000 over a two-week period, in addition to the \$1,000 that workers can claim from the federal government during the same period, by far the most generous support and the earliest province to introduce it. We're proud of that.

Ms Notley: He's doubling down on that one. Wow.

Let me try and paint a picture. Imagine that you're a single parent. You're the sole income earner, working in a grocery store. Times are tough, so you end the month with plus or minus 50 bucks. You've isolated once already because of the outbreak in your child's daycare. You're vaccinated, but you wake up one morning with a sore throat and a fever. Premier, solve this. How do you isolate in a hotel, buy groceries, pay rent, care for your child, and protect your co-workers on \$600 over two weeks?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that's a been a challenge for many families that have faced the self-isolation requirements. Families have struggled to cope, and they have. One way that they've coped is by having the assistance that we provided, which includes free room and board in addition to cash support, in addition to the federal support. The real issue here is that the NDP wants Alberta closed hard. They don't want us to have a summer. The Chicken Littles over there: they're already talking about a fourth wave. We're not even out of the third wave. Why can't they embrace the good news thanks to the hard work of Albertans?

Ms Notley: Why can't the Premier answer questions asked by Albertans?

Six hundred dollars and a hotel room does not offset the lost wages from two weeks and having to isolate; not even close. Under the Premier's so-called plan that mom either goes to work or she leaves her child at home alone with no food so that she can stay at the Relax Inn. Pretending this is the same thing as paid sick leave is exactly why this Premier hit a new low yesterday as the least trusted Premier in the country. Why won't he have an honest conversation with Albertans about his failure to support them as we try to get out of this pandemic?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the real new low was at the last election, when she was the first incumbent Premier defeated in an election in Alberta history after one term. [interjections] Now we get the fake elementary school laughing and heckling. You know, Albertans expect the government to make difficult decisions during a difficult time like this, and you know what that means? It means taking yes for an answer. Albertans have made huge sacrifices to bend the curve down, not just to bend it but to crush the curve. Albertans, especially those who are getting vaccinated, deserve to be rewarded with their freedoms coming back, and that's what's happening this summer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a question.

Kananaskis Country Park Fees

Mr. Schmidt: Yesterday the minister of the environment moved to cut off the democratic proceedings of this Legislature and ram

through his plans to ruin summer getaways for Albertans. He decided to cut off debate on legislation that will allow him to impose a fee for families visiting Kananaskis Country. K Country, for the record, had been free for 50 years, ever since it was created by Peter Lougheed. Can the Premier explain to Albertans why, with all of the challenges already facing families this year, he feels the need to gouge them with his K Country fee?

Mr. Kenney: Well, apparently, Mr. Speaker, the NDP – they just stopped. They were just whinging about opening Alberta, restoring people's fundamental, constitutionally protected freedoms. They now seem eager about a fourth wave. They're talking about that. Now they're opposed to this government's efforts to add additional conservation officers, parks officers, infrastructure to ensure the future of Kananaskis Country. As a Calgarian I can tell the member that Calgarians are excited about a government that is investing in the future of this province's greatest park.

Mr. Schmidt: Only this Premier would believe that freedom costs \$90 a year.

We know that many, many families are seeking refuge in Alberta's parks, where they can maintain physical distancing but also get some space from the challenges and grief caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that this environment minister tried to sell off or close down dozens of Alberta parks, and then he got caught. The Energy minister tried to lop the tops off mountains to mine coal, but then she got caught. Is this just the Premier's next step in his assault on Alberta's parks? If he can't sell them or scar them with mines, might as well . . .

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government had to step in to clean up the NDP's mess in K Country. We had record numbers of visits, record numbers of search and rescue and emergency calls, record amounts of trash being left behind, record numbers of campers. The NDP, how much did they invest in addressing those pressures on K Country? Zero. A big, fat goose egg. That's why all of the conservation groups, Trout Unlimited, the local community support these critical investments, understanding that like with the national parks and other large provincial parks across the country, we have to find a way of ensuring their future.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, there's one part of Kananaskis Country where the fees won't apply, Mr. Speaker, and that's McLean Creek. The minister plans to exempt McLean Creek from his new parks fee because, clearly, he feels that the real threat to our public lands are families picnicking, hiking, and biking on lands that have been Albertans' birthright for generations. Can the minister explain why a family going for a hike needs to pay \$15 a day, but somebody who wants to sink his quad into the mud up to the windshield can do that for free?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yet again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP show that their main goal is to try to ban all off-highway vehicle access from public lands, but they're going and misleading Albertans when it comes to this issue because McLean Creek does have a fee. In fact, that's the bill that's before the House. The bill that's before the House has nothing to do with provincial parks; that's underneath the Provincial Parks Act. The bill that's before the House brings forward a random camping fee and the ability to use ATVs, as this government promised that we'd be able to do by bringing through those modest fees for those issues instead of taking the NDP's approach, which was to ban them from their backyard. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon . . . [interjections] order. The hon. member is . . . [interjections] Order!

You've had your opportunity. If you'd like another one, perhaps you can negotiate with your team to get one, but you won't be asking any questions from a sedentary position.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Energy Policies

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the UCP introduced turn-off-the-taps legislation that was a weaker, more timid version of the bill we brought forward in government to defend Alberta's industry and workers. The UCP had to do this because they let our version expire. Now they've cut refined fuels from the bill, and those fuels were really the bargaining chip all along. This bill is akin to bringing a water pistol to a gunfight. The Premier was once talking a big game about turning off the taps. Why has he weakened our ability to stand up for Alberta's industry?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that question, from that member, takes some real chutzpah. That's the member who stood up at protests against the Northern Gateway pipeline, who cheered on Justin Trudeau in killing it. That's the member, part of the government who put a sunset clause in the bill. [interjections] The person heckling me now, the leader, she told me that when we proclaimed the legislation on day one of our government, it was certain that it would be overridden by the courts. She couldn't be more wrong. The Federal Court of Appeal ruled 3 to 1 in favour of Alberta and this legislation. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Ganley: The Premier should be reminded that our turn-off-the-taps legislation was a key bargaining tool to get TMX built, and as a result of our action it's actually getting built. Now in Michigan we have a threat to an active pipeline in line 5 because the Premier negotiates by name calling. The Premier said that he's done all he can because he went to the state nearly two years ago. Clearly, no one listened. How does the self-heralded jobs, economy, pipeline Premier explain to Albertans that his government may actually end up with fewer pipelines in play over their term?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that member didn't just ask Justin Trudeau to shut down Northern Gateway; she went to protests. She appeared before the National Energy Board demanding that the pipeline be cancelled. Her leader called for Keystone XL to be killed. When Trudeau killed Energy East, they were mute. They didn't say a peep about it. Now they're criticizing this government for strengthening this legislation that we brought into force. It was a fake threat by the NDP. We brought it into force, and it was upheld by the courts. We've done the right thing.

Ms Ganley: This Premier's energy strategy seems to involve more yelling in front of the media than cowering at the negotiating table. His so-called fight-back strategy has turned into nothing more than a whimper. Premier, if I'm wrong, prove it. Will the Premier explain to this House exactly how many jobs have been created or spared as a result of his toothless legislation, his four times late Allan inquiry, or his embarrassment of a war room? Premier, please be specific. Albertans see through your meaningless talking points.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, imagine the anti oil and gas party standing up and criticizing a government for actually keeping its word, keeping our election promises, to stand up and fight for the women and men in our industry. That is a member of a caucus, this

caucus, in this Legislature that sent members in front of this place to join chants about no more pipelines. That is the party that exists in part to oppose the presence of oil and gas in our economy, and that is one of the principle reasons they were the first ones from government defeated in Alberta electoral history.

Tourism Industry Supports

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, our tourism industry has been hit hard by the pandemic. They were the first to be impacted and due to travel restrictions have been the worst-hit industry. Tourism employs tens of thousands of Albertans across the province, our mountain regions as well as the Badlands, southern Alberta and northern Alberta and more. Our government took early action to ensure that our tourism operators had support; we are still providing assistance today. Can the Minister of Finance tell the House what the government has done to help the tourism industry?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm not sure there's been a sector that's been hit harder than the tourism and accommodation sector as a result of the pandemic. We have abated the tourism levy already from last March, when the pandemic first hit, providing hotels and tourism businesses with tens of millions of dollars in relief. Travel Alberta also provided \$27 million in grants and funding to tourism businesses in Alberta, and many tours and businesses have also received the SME relaunch grant, which today had its intake extended.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; thank you, Minister. Given those measures have helped businesses across the province ensure they had support and cash flow and given that even with the announcement today of our plan to be open for summer, it may still be a while before tourism businesses are fully open and given that as the parliamentary secretary for small businesses and tourism I've heard from small businesses and hotels across the province about the need for further support from government, can the Minister of Finance tell us what current measures are in place to help the tourism industry?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've announced just today that we are further abating the tourism levy, which will retroactively provide support to April 1 and give tourism businesses more money in their pockets. We expect that the abatement will give a total of \$36 million in support for tourism operators across Alberta. Again, we've extended the intake for the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant, and we've ensured that hotels are eligible for funding.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; thank you, Minister. Given that we know that many tourism businesses were heavily impacted and that restrictions on travel and events have caused many of them to struggle financially and given that many other businesses have struggled as well, whether they are restaurants, retail, or others, and given that part of Alberta's economic recovery and stability is the success of its small business, can the Minister of Finance tell us what broad-based supports have been made available for businesses

across Alberta, particularly the small businesses, that are the lifeblood of our communities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Small businesses are the lifeblood of so many communities right across the province, and to support them during this very difficult year, we provided \$350 million in relief through WCB premium abatement. Almost a billion dollars of funding is available through the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant, and right now we are also extending the tourism levy abatement.

Support for Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Mr. Bilous: Today the Premier promised a bright future for Alberta restaurants and hospitality providers during his press conference, yet he fails to recognize the mountains of debt that have been piled onto them and other small businesses across the province, debt that doesn't go away because the Premier decides to allow them to reopen. We know that one-third of small businesses may close their doors forever. Will the Premier provide additional support for small businesses? They're reopening, Premier, but the damage from your horrible pandemic management has already been done.

2:10

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find that pretty rich coming from a party that would have had this province in perpetual lockdown from day one. We're providing close to one and a half billion dollars in direct business support for businesses and entrepreneurs across the province. We recognize the great challenge they're facing. We're providing support and continuing to listen to them.

Mr. Bilous: The challenge they're facing is getting the money.

Given that Alberta's NDP has talked to dozens upon dozens of small businesses that have not received a dime of support from the relaunch grant for the third wave that was announced in March and given that many we have spoken to have been flagged for review and told not to expect a dollar until at least July and given that the Premier expanded the application period for the grant today but can't even get the money out the door to those who have already applied, Premier, explain to small business owners why you delayed support over and over while they drown in debt.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Close to \$700 million is already out the door with respect to the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant, and right now, under the latest round, applications are being turned around, in most cases, between 10 and 14 days. There is a very small percentage of applications that requires further follow-up in order to make sure that we maintain integrity in our financial system, something the members opposite know nothing about.

Mr. Bilous: Prove it.

Given that this much-delayed third round of support for small and medium-sized businesses only covers 15 per cent of one month's revenue and given that business owners like Nicole Perinski* in Lethbridge told us that the total \$955 she's eligible for won't even cover one month's rent, let alone the four full months she's gone without operating, will the Premier admit that his supports for small

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

businesses are grossly inadequate, apologize to business owners like Nicole, and finally step up with the necessary funding that she and so many other business owners require?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely acknowledge the great challenge that many small businesses have faced during the last year. That's why Alberta leads the nation in directly supporting small businesses during this pandemic. That's why we came out with \$350 million in WCB premium relief. That's why we invested \$67 million in the commercial rent assistance program. And that's why we're providing almost a billion dollars in the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant.

Mental Health Service Access

Ms Sigurdson: The COVID-19 pandemic has been punishing for the mental health of Albertans. We've all been isolated from our loved ones. Hundreds of thousands of families have been thrown into chaos by job losses and school closures. Thousands of families are struggling with grief. In December our caucus proposed that every Albertan should be able to see a mental health professional through the provincial insurance plan. Has the associate minister reviewed our proposal, and will he commit to this plan to help Albertans?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct that we recognize the pandemic has had an impact on mental health. That is why we spend \$1.7 billion a year on mental health and addiction services, and that includes \$53 million for the COVID mental health and addiction action plan, the biggest investment of its kind in the entire country. Today we announced that the end of the pandemic is finally in sight, and what's the NDP's response? A demand for more money, more spending. We'll keep leading Alberta out of this pandemic, and the NDP can keep showing up, day by day showing that they have absolutely nothing to add.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that reopening is not the sole answer to the many, many mental health challenges and grief being faced by Albertans and given that the Expert Psychologists Interagency Clinical Network has circulated a petition in support of providing insured access to psychologists for Albertans and given that this petition has drawn more than 10,000 signatures and I'll table it today following question period, will the associate minister listen to these 10,000 Albertans who are joining our call for access for professional mental health support? If not, what's his excuse to thousands of Albertans demanding he do more to address mental health challenges?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we increased contact tracing, the NDP said: "What? We need more." When we topped up wages for staff in continuing care, what did the NDP say? We need more. It's all they know how to do, and I would encourage them to take yes for an answer. When it comes to mental health and addictions spending, let me repeat those numbers: \$1.7 billion in funding and \$53 million just to address the additional impacts brought forward through the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to invest in these important areas.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that a new study today found that Albertans have dealt with the highest degree of misery during the COVID-19 pandemic and given that this Premier spent a year downplaying the risks and seriousness of COVID-19 while thousands died and hundreds of thousands got sick and given that any successful economic relaunch strategy must include a plan to address the long-term health effects of the pandemic, will the minister or anyone on that side of the House be accountable for once, take responsibilities for failures, and introduce new help to support those who lost so much?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I would just like to ask the members opposite to take yes for an answer.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to say thank you, thank you and congratulations, to Albertans because the reopening that we announced just an hour ago is because of your hard work and sacrifice.

We will continue to fund mental health supports, including \$25 million for a new community grant program, \$21.4 million for programs like the addiction helpline, the mental health helpline, and Kids Help Phone, and, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to lead Albertans out of this pandemic towards a glorious Alberta summer.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's UCP government was elected on a promise to stand up to Ottawa and fight for a fair deal. Prior to the 2019 provincial election I threw my support behind a leader that campaigned on scrapping Bill C-48, fixing Bill C-69, removing the carbon tax, getting rid of the cap on the fiscal stabilization plan, and fixing a devastating equalization program. To the Premier: would the man who drove thousands of miles in his blue Dodge support what is going on in the province right now, or will he start to stand up for Alberta families?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government kept its commitment to sue the federal government over the constitutionality of Bill C-69. It's before the Alberta appeal court. We kept our commitment to support a First Nation in suing the federal government over Bill C-48. We kept our commitment to scrap the carbon tax. We kept our commitment to sue the federal government over the carbon tax. We kept our commitment to build a multiprovince coalition on that. We won on our commitment to get the cap lifted on the fiscal stabilization program, and this fall we keep our commitment to hold a referendum on equalization.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the government's failure to secure a fair deal has hurt Alberta blue-collar workers, small businesses, and rural families. Given that the loss of billions of dollars on major projects like the Teck Frontier mine and Keystone XL will be felt for decades by our communities and First Nations and given that the reaction from Alberta's Premier has been extremely underwhelming, writing letters and then promptly forgetting about us, Premier, when our future is on the line, why do you continue to make promises without action?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member just said that the response on Keystone XL was underwhelming. We bought Keystone XL. We invested in a historic investment that the member was opposed to, by my recollection. Trans-Canada Energy was going to pull the plug and kill it of their own volition. This government kept it alive so we could fight for another day. We still hope, depending on the

future in American politics and the courts, that we'll get that built, but that member was opposed to this government's critical investment that created thousands of jobs in Canada, including many in his own constituency, last year.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that recent stats show that if an election were held today, only 1 in 4 Albertans would vote for this Premier's government and given that the Premier doesn't like to face questions about how he has lost the support of Albertans and lifelong Conservative volunteers alike while being out fund raised by the opposition, Mr. Premier, will your low popularity jeopardize Alberta's upcoming equalization referendum along with our chance for a fair and prosperous partnership with other Canadian provinces?

The Speaker: I'd just provide some caution to the hon. the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat that questions asked during question period should be about government policy, not about particular individuals in the Assembly.

But the hon. the Premier could answer if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Kenney: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is not interested in a fair partnership with other provinces. He's interested in separating, something that about 15 per cent of Albertans support. This government has managed to get a massive coalition of provinces supporting our opposition to Bill C-69, supporting energy and resource corridors, opposing the federal carbon tax, opposing Bill C-48. Never before has Alberta had more support across the country for our agenda for a fair deal in the federation.

2:20

Drug Overdose Prevention

Member Irwin: Clifford Mitchell was a loving father and grandfather. He was more than a statistic; he was a person with family and friends, who miss him deeply. On Friday we suddenly lost Clifford and two of his friends in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. At a time when life-saving supports have never been more critical, this government has cut harm reduction services, housing, and more. Last year alone, deaths from overdose nearly doubled. This government's lack of a plan is failing our neighbours. I don't want to see another person lost to this deadly crisis. On behalf of those who've lost loved ones, will this Premier take action before even more lives are tragically lost?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, our condolences go out to the families and loved ones of those who died in Edmonton over the weekend. It is absolutely a tragedy, and it's sad to see the NDP playing politics with it. They continue to say that we're taking resources away from harm reduction, particularly in Edmonton, and both of those claims are absolutely false. In fact, we recently increased capacity at the George Spady supervised consumption site, across the street from the Boyle Street facility, and we expanded its hours to 24/7.

Member Irwin: Given that I'm not playing politics – I spoke with Clifford Mitchell's daughter Naomi just yesterday. This is not about politics. This is about human lives, and for you to accuse me of politicizing it is absolutely reprehensible.

Dedicated workers at Boyle Street Community Services and other front-line organizations are absolutely heartbroken by these deaths. They're calling for an emergency action plan, but this government has not committed to accepting one. Will this government commit today, immediately, to implementing an emergency plan to address the opioid crisis?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, in my role as Minister of Children's Services we have met with the staff of Boyle Street, and I'm grateful for the incredible work that they do. I also want to say that our government is working with the Edmonton police and other stakeholders as part of the Alberta model, a high-quality, accessible system of care, including services that reduce harm. We're investing in opioid agonist therapies, medical detox, supportive recovery, residential addiction treatment, opioid dependency clinics, and a virtual opioid dependency program. We're the first province in Canada to eliminate daily user fees for publicly funded residential . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Given that every life lost to an overdose is a tragedy and that we as legislators must commit to doing better, I'm going to repeat my question to the minister because she failed to answer it. We're hearing from Boyle Street Community Services, Boyle McCauley health centre, the George Spady Centre, front-line workers, countless community members. The message is clear. There needs to be an emergency plan in place. Will you right now, today, commit to an emergency plan, commit to addressing the concerns of families, of front-line workers? Lives depend on it.

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is a tragedy, and our approach focuses on recovery. That's because it works. To take just one example, in 2020 we provided \$2.2 million to the Walter "Slim" Thorpe Recovery Centre in Lloydminster to create 1,722 treatment spaces. Since April 2020 Thorpe has helped 697 people on their recovery journey. Of those, over 230 were made possible because of our increased funding. We will continue to focus on working with community partners and making important investments in this area.

Canada Pension Plan

Ms Phillips: Well, the results are in, a record-breaking 20.4 per cent return for the Canada pension plan, but that's not good enough for the UCP. They want to leave one of the most successful pension managers in the world and give Albertans' retirement savings to AIMCo, an organization that is in disarray, has lost billions on risky bets, and hasn't hit its targets for the past 10 years. Now, Albertans have been very clear. They don't want this government anywhere near their CPP retirement savings, so to the Finance minister: besides carrying the Premier's political water, why trade one of the best performing asset managers in the world for one of the worst in Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to acknowledge the good returns that the CPPIB has had over the last year and over the last number of years, but that's not the fundamental question in front of us as a government and in front of us as Albertans as we continue to investigate the opportunities for the province to repatriate Alberta's portion of our national pension plan to an Alberta pension plan. We believe the opportunity justifies the investigation. The folks across the way would categorically rule out the opportunity to potentially have the most competitive business environment in the country.

Ms Phillips: Albertans don't want the opportunity to lose their retirement.

Given that CPP has consistently surpassed its targets and now has nearly \$500 billion in assets seven years ahead of schedule, given that AIMCo has consistently delivered substandard results, hasn't met its targets in the past 10 years, and given that AIMCo's consistent underperformance just led to the universities pension plan to leave in search of better returns, to the Finance minister. Albertans have said loud and clear that they don't want incompetent UCP meddling in their CPP retirement. I know the UCP has heard this from Albertans. The question is: when will the government start listening?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear that Albertans would have the final say in terms of moving forward with an Alberta pension plan or not. But what surprises me is that the members opposite will not even acknowledge that an investigation is worthy of the time. There's potential that a repatriated Alberta pension plan could provide employers and every employee in this province with tens of thousands of dollars of extra take-home income per year. I cannot understand the position of the opposition. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Phillips: The minister sounds pretty comfortable gambling their retirement.

Given that Albertans work very hard for our CPP – we put away money each and every paycheque with the promise that that money will be carefully invested – and given that CPP consistently delivers exceptional results, like the 20 per cent returns last year, while AIMCo's results have been described in the financial press as amateur hour, to the Minister of Finance: why is the UCP so willing to play self-interested political games with ordinary people's retirement money by leaving one of the best pension managers in the world, the CPP, for one of the worst, least respected fund managers in Canada, the UCP's AIMCo?

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Albertans will have the final say with an Alberta pension plan, and I believe we owe it to Albertans to do the work, the due diligence, so they can make an informed decision. But with respect to AIMCo, AIMCo is making some very significant changes to their risk management policy and profiles, and I'm confident that they'll deliver well for Albertans in the future. The actual structure at AIMCo that we inherited, we inherited from the previous government, so the member opposite is effectively criticizing their own policy.

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

Alberta 2030 Postsecondary Education Strategy

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Minister of Advanced Education announced a review of our postsecondary system. Recently that review was presented to Albertans along with a 10-year strategy to transform higher education centred on six goals: to improve access and student experience, develop skills for jobs, support innovation and commercialization, strengthen internationalization, improve sustainability and affordability, and strengthen system governance. Noble goals. To the minister: what changes can we expect to see from the Alberta 2030, building skills for jobs strategy?

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

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can expect to see a number of significant changes to our postsecondary system as a result of this effort in the development of this new 10-year strategic plan. More specifically, one of the things that we're looking at is to improve the transfer system within our postsecondary system, help strengthen learning outcomes for students to help ensure that they're equipped with skills for jobs so they can move on to successful careers as well as to improve governance within our postsecondary system and to develop models that'll help bring all of the different players in our higher education ecosystem together to achieve better outcomes. We'll have more to say on that in the coming weeks and months.

The Speaker: Hon. members, my apologies. I failed to note a point of order at 2:27 although I did note it.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his efforts. Given that Alberta is in a more challenging position than it's ever been, with impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the price of oil, and global economic factors, and given that a highly skilled and competitive workforce will be key to our province getting back on track and excelling in emerging industries, to the same minister: how will the goals and initiatives of Alberta 2030 help Albertans get back to work and succeed in diversifying our economy?

2:30

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives that we're pursuing within Alberta 2030 that'll help us achieve these goals. There are many that I'm quite excited about, but in particular we have established a very ambitious goal to become the first province in Canada to offer every undergraduate student a work-integrated learning opportunity. Yes, it is ambitious, but we are confident that, working collaboratively together with our institutions and employers, we can achieve that goal. Of course, when students have the opportunity to participate in an internship or a co-op opportunity, they're set up for success, and they have faster transitions to work and broadly have higher career success.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta 2030 was the largest review of Alberta's postsecondary system in 15 years and given that broad and meaningful engagement is crucial to having a comprehensive strategy that addresses the concerns from all stakeholders, to the minister: can you please share with the members of this House what groups were consulted with and how their contributions helped develop this transformational strategy for Alberta's postsecondary system?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, making sure that we engaged in broad consultation was critically important, and we did that. We hosted over 115 one-on-one interviews, 30 round-table discussions, town halls, public forums, over 5,600 survey responses, and others. That's how we arrived at the development of the key pillars that we're pursuing. We sought to engage with our postsecondary community to understand where the pain points are and where we should focus our efforts. I'm particularly excited about all of the engagement effort that we undertook in the development of this new plan.

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

Postsecondary Education Funding and Tuition

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our postsecondary system in Alberta is key to our economic recovery, and this Premier fails to understand this basic fact. He'll waste \$30 million annually on a war room while cutting the funding, for example, to the University of Calgary by \$25 million. What are the results? Massive tuition hikes: a 32 per cent increase for engineering students, 25 per cent for students attempting to get their MBAs. This is just for domestic students. International students could see an increase of 51 per cent. Why is the minister putting universities in this awful situation, that they have to pile further debt onto students attempting to get the tools that they need to be successful?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, let me just correct the member opposite. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government recognizes that our postsecondary institutions are critical to Alberta's economic success and continued vitality. But to the member's question particularly, he should know, of course, that as per the tuition regulations that are in place, primarily the exceptional tuition regulation that actually their government developed, institutions have the ability to make recommendations for exceptional increases. Institutions are doing that in accordance with the regulation that they put in place. Of course, we will evaluate those proposals to ensure that they meet the intended objectives and make a decision.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this is the minister who holds the pen on whether they would allow those exceptional increases or not and given that the proposed tuition hikes are in addition already to 7 per cent hikes implemented at the University of Calgary in 2019 and again 7 per cent more in 2020, to the minister. Students are struggling enough as it is. Now, with the unprecedented global pandemic, is it really the time to download the giant cuts that you are imposing on Alberta students?

Mr. Nicolaides: Again, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for exceptional increases exists because of the members opposite and the regulations they put in place. The regulation stipulates that any proposal for an exceptional increase must engage student leaders and, furthermore, must be demonstrated to improve the quality of the program, so institutions cannot use these exceptional increases to fill revenue shortfalls. When we receive the applications – and we haven't received any to date – we will evaluate them very carefully against the criteria that are set out in the regulation and make a decision from there.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that this Premier has slashed the funding to the University of Calgary by nearly \$87 million since 2019 and given that the resulting tuition hikes means that some students will be having to pay \$11,000 or more per year just to get through the door and given that the Ministry of Advanced Education put out a statement that the UCP is committed to ensuring that postsecondary remains accessible, to the minister. Again, he holds the pen, which is attached to his brain, that can make the decision to not have those exceptional cuts. Will he commit to doing that now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it relates to funding and tuition levels, obviously, as the member noted, we have stated that ensuring postsecondary education is affordable and accessible is a priority, which is why tuition levels today are at the same level as B.C. and well below the national average. It's also why Alberta 2030 identified the need to provide additional support

in student aid, primarily through grants and bursaries. It's also why Alberta's government has created new scholarships over the course of the past year, to help provide the right supports for students. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has a question to ask.

Toll Roads and Bridges

Mr. Dach: Since taking office this government has made life more expensive for Albertans. Everything from owning a car to using electricity to living in a house has become more expensive because of the policies and actions of the UCP. The Transportation minister left it wide open so that new lanes of existing highways could be tolled – tolled – which would include also the Deerfoot expansion announced a short while ago. So on behalf of every Calgarian who is worried that driving on the Deerfoot might become more expensive because of the UCP, will the minister commit that not one cent of tolls will be taken from drivers on the Deerfoot?

Mr. Panda: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to Albertans, because the NDP doesn't take yes for an answer: there won't be any tolls on Deerfoot, period. The Minister of Transportation made it very clear that there won't be any tolls on existing infrastructure, period.

Mr. Dach: Given that they're playing with language once again, Mr. Speaker, and given that this government claims to support Alberta taxpayers but that is not borne out by the cost of the fees, taxes, and premiums that have been hiked by the UCP and given that Albertans saw right through this government's wordplay about tolls on existing roads – existing roads is what they keep talking about – especially with the Minister of Transportation confirming that tolls could be seen on new lanes of existing roads, will the minister, rather than trying to sneak new tolls into the infrastructure that Albertans rely on, commit to public consultation and a municipal plebiscite before any tolls are applied on existing or new roads?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I already answered, but let me update Calgarians, because Deerfoot is the busiest road in Alberta and Calgarians want that to be decongested. That's why we are investing \$200 million in taxpayers' money and we are attracting another \$200 million through a P3 contractor. In total, we are investing \$400 million to improve roads and bridges related to the Deerfoot in Calgary. That makes life better for Calgarians.

Mr. Dach: Given that Albertans are skeptical about anything any minister of this government says and given that insurance premiums were hiked around the Minister of Finance and Albertans were told to shop around but given that Albertans can't shop around for new highways to drive on, especially when it comes to one of the busiest roads in the largest city in the province, will the Minister of Transportation stop the games, stop the word tricks, and just commit that he will resign if a single, solitary cent is collected from a toll on the Deerfoot? I'm including new and existing lanes, Minister. Stop the word games.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, these guys think that money grows on trees. Anyways, I already addressed this question, but let me talk about the \$20.7 billion this government is going to invest in Alberta infrastructure, which will make life better for Albertans and improve quality of life and reduce costs. We are building schools, hospitals everywhere, and in Calgary, particularly, we are doing the Court of Appeal building and so many infrastructure projects, including schools and hospitals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

Kananaskis Country Park Fees (continued)

Mrs. Allard: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been flocking to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains in record numbers over the last year, and we expect that this trend will continue this summer. The parks and public lands of the Kananaskis region in particular were well enjoyed in 2020, with over 5 million visits to the park. The high number of visitors has also led to a strain on the park infrastructure, increasing litter and vandalism and creating increased wear on trails. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: please outline how the proposed conservation pass will help address these problems.

2:40

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Kananaskis conservation pass will reinvest all funds collected directly back into conservation, public safety, boots on the ground, visitor services, and infrastructure improvements in Kananaskis parks and public lands. The conservation pass will support much-needed services and infrastructure improvement all across K Country, including \$11.5 million in funding for new projects, including investment in new conservation officers, visitor centres, and making sure that Albertans can continue to enjoy that park for generations to come. Most importantly, it will do important work to overcome emergency management deficits that the NDP government left in place in our largest park.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that several municipalities such as Canmore fall within the boundary for the Kananaskis conservation pass and given that I have heard from several constituents and Albertans sharing concerns about whether they'll still be able to access these municipalities without a fee and further given that the Kananaskis conservation pass area is home to thousands of Albertans, to the same minister: can you please clarify which jurisdictions and people are exempted from the Kananaskis conservation pass and how that was determined?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, First Nations peoples, first of all, and Albertans receiving AISH or Alberta income support as well as the Alberta adult health benefit will be exempt from the Kananaskis conservation pass as well as random camping fees. We will also be following Banff and Jasper's direction in creating certain free days to be able to access the park to make sure other low-income Albertans can be able to participate in Kananaskis. For municipalities that are within the area, residents of the municipality will be of course exempt from the Kananaskis conservation pass as they access their municipality. There you go.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you again to the minister. Given that Alberta is home to over 400 provincial parks and hundreds of thousands of hectares of public land and given that a \$30 per year camping pass is also being implemented for camping on public land in the eastern slopes and further given that the area covered by the Kananaskis conservation pass includes public land, to the same minister: will Albertans have to pay both the public lands camping pass and the Kananaskis conservation pass, and will there be fees for the other provincial parks outside of this area?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, no, Albertans definitely will not have to pay for both passes. One pass will apply to random camping areas in the eastern slopes, and the other pass will apply to both public land and parks within the Kananaskis region. There will not be a fee for both to be able to go to those types of locations. The reality for other campgrounds across the province is that there are already fees charged for camping. Unfortunately, the NDP government took those fees and used them to pay off services within Kananaskis and then let our parks system fall into disrepair all across the province. This will finally make sure Kananaskis can pay for itself and that we can protect all of our park areas.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the remainder of the Routine.

Hon. members, actually, if I can, I just may provide the Premier a point of clarification on a statement he made earlier.

Energy Policies (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. During question period I mistook or confused the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View with the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, and I apologize unreservedly. I made certain claims that were inaccurately attributed. I'm sorry. I'll blame the confusion here with masks, but maybe I need to get glasses as well. I apologize to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

The Speaker: In 30 seconds or less we will proceed immediately to the remainder of the Routine.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Lethbridge-West.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of an online petition of 10,000 signatures in support of increased access to professional mental health support for all Albertans. It is by the Expert Psychologists Interagency Clinical Network, or sometimes called EPIC. I have the first copy here in these two boxes, and the other four have already been pre-delivered to the tablings and Journals office. I need a strong page.

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a very emotional letter I received from a Baptist faith leader in Lethbridge about the effects of COVID-19 on front-line workers, unnecessary cuts, and so on. I commend the letter to all members of the House.

I also have the requisite five copies of a letter to the Premier from the city of Lethbridge with respect to reinstatement of the 1976 coal policy and a number of related actions that the city of Lethbridge would like the government to take with respect to the coal policy.

In addition, I also have, Mr. Speaker, a letter from Katie-Jo Rabbit, a constituent who is very worried about biodiversity and connections to the land and government policy with respect to land base management.

I have another letter from a constituent named Ken Hakstol, who is very concerned about environmental policies and the need to protect the environment from damage.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the requisite five copies of correspondence from the south region council of disability services, who are very concerned about the wage replacement program

undertaken by the government and the uneven effects that it had for disability workers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of this picture, taken by a concerned constituent of Lesser Slave Lake, showing the condition of part of provincial highway 88, that I'd like to table.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of tablings. The first one is from the St. Albert public school board, where they outline their significant concerns about the UCP curriculum.

Then I have 13 out of hundreds of letters that I have received from constituents with concerns about the curriculum. The first is from Tyler Gagan. The second is from Renee Trottier. The third is from Jody Stacey. The fourth is from Sally Rudakoff. The fifth is from Michelle Duquette. The sixth is from Kelly Ternovatsky. Sorry if I mispronounced that. The next one is from Lisa Airey. The next one is from Dana and Ryan Nord. The next one is from Julie Manfrin. The next one is from Derek Malin. The next one, I'm not going to pronounce it because I will butcher it. The next one is from Alicia Bjarnason. The next one is from Alice Marchand. And the final one, with five copies, is from Wilf.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night during debates on Bill 57 I mentioned a post from the Metis Settlements General Council website in regard to the results of months and months of meetings, during which the accountability, enforcement, and public interest provisions of the act and related legislation, including general council policies, were carefully considered despite the view of the opposition.

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. Madu, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, Law Society of Alberta 2020 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order, and at 2:29 the deputy government whip raised a point of order.

Point of Order Preambles

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As to the point of order that was raised at 2:29, as you had mentioned, against the Member for Lethbridge-West for the use of a preamble, all members of this Chamber know that the use of a preamble after the first four questions is not permitted, especially for members who are returning to this Chamber after sitting in government for four years. That member should know better. She used two preambles in a row on both of her questions. The second one, of course, was used to actually call into question the integrity of the Minister of Finance, suggesting that he's gambling with pensions and Alberta's future. I

ask that that member be called to order and refrain from using preambles in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It appears someone is interested in your job.

Around this particular point of order, Mr. Speaker, I've checked our standing orders. If the member is able to quote from the standing orders; I don't see it. It is our practice and it is my understanding and certainly what I've seen in this Chamber that when a preamble is inappropriately used, you will often call the member and provide them with a caution. I would suggest that this is not a point of order at this time, but I look forward to hearing your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as well as perhaps the ideal reference for this to govern behaviour going forward.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I am prepared to rule. For the Opposition House Leader's and perhaps the deputy whip's – I'm not sure – benefit, the citation that is most commonly used in the context of the Alberta Legislature is *Beauchesne* 409 section (2): "The question must be brief... A long preamble [or a preamble] takes an unfair share of time." It goes on to discuss a number of different ways that the preamble may or may not be used. In Alberta we've seen, particularly with Speaker Zwozdesky and many other previous Speaker rulings, that to not even mean a quip with respect to what a preamble is or isn't, so there has been much, much discussion about this particular point of order.

I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West said, "Albertans don't want the opportunity to lose their retirement" and then very clearly starts the rest of her question when she says, "Given that CPP has constantly surpassed its targets." Then she goes on in the additional supplementary question, "The minister sounds pretty comfortable gambling their retirement" and then clearly her question begins when she says, "Given that Albertans work very hard for our CPP – we put away money" each month from our paycheques. Then she goes on to conclude the rest of her question.

I would submit that, in fact, after the first misuse of a preamble by the hon. member, I almost provided some cautionary tales. At the second use of the preamble, the hon. member did, in fact, raise a point of order because, as it turns out, it was one. I won't be asking her to apologize, but I will be reminding all members that the use of a preamble after question 4 is not only against the rules, but it is wildly inappropriate.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 72

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 72, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act.

Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a commitment to fight for our energy resources and our oil and gas sector. Our government has relentlessly worked to protect the value of our resources and to ensure that we have every option available to us to

defend Alberta, our economy, our resources, and our people. Albertans have been clear. They want the government to stand up for the province and for our energy industry. That's exactly what we'll continue to do. Bill 72 will continue to provide the government with authority to restrict exports of natural gas and crude oil if necessary and be able to protect Alberta's resources.

The intent of the legislation and the authority it provides is virtually unchanged from previous legislation of the same name. However, through simple changes this legislation will strengthen our defence against potential legal challenges. The Constitution gives provinces the authority over interprovincial export of primary production of natural resources. This new legislation more closely aligns with this concept by removing references to refined fuels that were in the previous legislation. The previous legislation faced legal challenges, most of which were centred around this reference to refined fuels. Through this exclusion we are reducing the likelihood that the new act will be ruled unconstitutional in any future legal challenges should they arise.

The improved legislation also does not include a sunset clause, which the previous legislation had. As before, Bill 72 would give the Minister of Energy authority to require companies to acquire a licence before exporting crude oil or natural gas from Alberta via pipeline, rail, or truck. This authority could be used at the minister's discretion if it were determined to be in the public interest. In the event that licensing would be deemed necessary, further details would be developed. Having this legislation is simply a matter of ensuring that we have every option available to protect our province. Using the authority would be the final, not the first, step in defending Alberta, and we will continue to seek the path of diplomacy while assertively protecting our vital economic interests.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 72.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising just to go with Standing Order 3(1) to advise the Assembly that there will be no morning sitting tomorrow, Thursday, May 27, 2021.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 72. I think it's worth going over the history, a little bit, of where this bill came from initially. At the time that this bill was originally proposed by the NDP government, we were in a situation where there was significant opposition by the province of British Columbia to the Trans Mountain pipeline. The Trans Mountain pipeline is obviously critical to Albertans' interests, and at that time we were seeing a massive differential on the prices that Alberta could get for its oil, relative to other jurisdictions. That differential was occurring because we had limited means by which to move that product to market.

Because that was a significant concern and because projections indicated that the Trans Mountain pipeline was absolutely necessary to move production – and I hasten to remind all members of the House that because of the volume of productions, definitely at the time, not only was significantly more capacity needed, but the alternative to that was transport by way of rail. In fact, moves were made in that direction as well. But, at the time, the people of Alberta were essentially getting a significantly lower return for our resources than would have been the case for anyone else in the

world. That was a concern because that was having a direct impact on the economy here in Alberta. It was having a direct impact on employment here in Alberta. It was hurting the lives of Albertans.

So we took steps to defend that, and they were strong steps. We brought in place this bill, which was designed to allow the government the opportunity to basically turn off the taps coming out of Alberta. Again, that wasn't a tool that we ultimately needed to use. It's a heavy tool. That is a very heavy tool. We thought seriously about it before we brought it in, and the reason we thought seriously about it is for exactly that reason, that it's a very intense response. But it was, at the time, a critical part of our negotiating strategy, ensuring that we were able to get our product to tidewater. Ultimately, our strategy was successful. The Trans Mountain pipeline is under construction. That pipeline was approved under us. It was moving forward under the NDP government, so the legislation served, in my view, its purpose.

Now, we never had to use it. Just the existence of that tool, among other things, I think, was sufficient to motivate the government of British Columbia. But I think we do have to keep in mind that the sort of primary motivating factor there was refined fuels. That was the thing that would have the impact, because that would have an impact on prices in jurisdictions like British Columbia. It would have a direct impact on people's lives, and that was intended to be the motivating factor. And, let me be clear, this wasn't the only tool we employed.

3:00

We employed, to great effect, messaging about the safety and importance of pipelines, about the importance to the economic prosperity of this province, and unlike the current government and their strategy, we measured the impact. We started with 40 per cent approval outside of Alberta for pipelines, and we moved it to almost 70 per cent. That's a big deal. That is a big deal. It resulted in providing room for the federal government to intervene, take over that project, and get it done. Ultimately, this was a strategy that was extremely successful. It was a strategy that was extremely successful, yes, because we had this very strong legislation but also because we worked sensibly with people, we advertised into other jurisdictions, and we measured the impact of the money that we were spending. And that had the impact we needed it to have. It helped our industry, it supported jobs, and it brought prices up. All of that, I think, was critically important.

The problem that I see now with what the current Minister of Energy is saying – she keeps referring to having every option available open to us, but the issue with this legislation is precisely that, that every option is not available. Refined fuels are off the table.

I hasten to point out that the court did not in fact render the ruling that she implies that they did. The court did not rule that the legislation was unconstitutional. In fact, mere days before it expired, that same minister was out doing a victory lap on how the court had upheld the legislation, and then, mere days later, they allowed the legislation to expire. One might, if one were a suspicious type, wonder if perhaps the reason they have made this change at all, which essentially removes the most important tool in the legislation – one might wonder if perhaps that change was made to make it appear that the expiring was intentional, because it doesn't seem like the actions of a government that was doing something intentional to celebrate the legislation one day, allow it to expire, not announce that you were allowing it to expire or any reason for allowing it to expire only to respond when a journalist points out that it has expired, and then, through a legislative pause, have time to introduce new legislation. Now, I know, certainly, that

the government claims that that's intentional, but I might suggest that the facts on the ground don't reflect that entirely.

I think it's worth noting as well that the minister has indicated that they have removed the sunset clause, presumably so they don't make the same error again. You know, that sunset clause was an example of something we used to have here in this Legislature, which is to say crosspartisan co-operation. It was brought forward as part of an opposition amendment from the Alberta Party, and it was ultimately accepted.

I might add as well that, like I said, this was a tool in a range of tools available to our government at the time to ensure that the Trans Mountain pipeline proceeded forward. We never proclaimed this because it never became necessary. As I've noted, that pipeline is going forward. We, in fact, suggested to the current government when they came into office that immediate proclamation wasn't necessarily a good idea. What wound up happening is that they proclaimed it, it was immediately subject to a legal challenge, which ultimately was not upheld, and then it expired.

I feel like perhaps it speaks to a lack of strategy, it speaks to using bluster where substance would be a better choice, and it really speaks to this government's overall strategy. We have an inquiry that was originally meant to look into false and misleading claims made by environmental organizations that were being allegedly funded by people who didn't care about environmentalism but only cared about depressing prices in Alberta. Now we have the woman whose research launched that inquiry reneging on her original claims that it was done intentionally to depress prices in Alberta, and we have an inquiry that has said that it can't pronounce on whether or not the claims are false or misleading. So one might wonder what \$3.5 million over two years has been spent doing because it certainly hasn't done anything for our industry.

It certainly hasn't done anything for jobs in this province, and that's a concern. This current government ran on jobs, economy, pipeline, and we find ourselves in a situation where we've seen a significant economic downturn, where we've seen 50,000 jobs lost even before the pandemic hit, and where we now are seeing a high likelihood of this government having fewer pipelines at the end of its term than at the beginning. This is not because the work that the NDP government did to get the Trans Mountain through has failed – no, no; that is continuing – but because this Premier insists on negotiating by insulting people. I mean, we will never know, if he hadn't referred to the governor of another state as, quote, unquote, brain-dead, whether or not line 5 would currently be under threat. What we do know is that that name-calling tactic has not been effective, and I think it has not been effective in a number of ways. The inquiry, quite apart from wasting money and now apparently not investigating anything at all, has hurt our international reputation. It has driven investment out of this province because international capital cares about ESG factors, and every time Alberta acts like we don't care, it injures investment in our industry.

In addition, as part of the same strategy we see a war room, a war room which has – I mean, quite apart from the fact that it's costing an enormous amount of money, millions of dollars a year, there are no measures on whether it's having any impact at all. I would argue that the reason that there are no measures of that is because it is in fact having a negative impact. Every time Alberta goes out and goes after a children's film, that doesn't reinforce with the international investment community that we are taking our responsibility seriously. I think that's incredibly sad because the truth is that our industry does take their responsibility seriously, but this current government does a bad job of explaining that to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. They have made innovations, important innovations, taken important steps forward, but this

government and their failed fight-back strategy just continues to drive away investment, and with that investment goes jobs.

I think that, ultimately, that is incredibly sad because Albertans did elect this government. They did. I am never going to deny it. That is the outcome of the election. This government was elected, but it was elected on promises, and those promises – you know, the government will talk about their, like, hundred-bazillion-page platform that nobody read, but the truth is that the thing that people voted for was jobs, economy, pipeline, and the government has delivered on none of those things. In fact, we are doing worse on all of those measures than we were in 2019.

Yes, the pandemic has had an impact. I won't deny that either, but we were down 50,000 jobs before the pandemic even hit, and now this government is running around celebrating what economists say will be a, quote, unquote, K-shaped recession. Essentially, what economists are saying is that those who are doing very well will continue to do well, but those who have struggled through the pandemic will struggle even more so. Well, I don't know, but I don't think that's anything to celebrate. I think a jobless recovery is nothing to celebrate, because I don't think that most Albertans are concerned about how much international investors are making off Alberta. I think most Albertans are concerned about: do they have jobs to pay their mortgages and feed their families? That is what this recovery is likely to lack, and the government seems uninterested in doing anything about it.

3:10

I think that that is a huge problem, and we have seen this government take multiple steps, you know; for instance, delaying money that was meant to go into the hands of front-line workers, money that could have gone into the hands of those who have the least at a time when it could have supported them. As we know, those who have less are way more likely to spend their money in the local economy. It could have gone to support those struggling small businesses that this government has been so slow to support.

I think we've seen a lot of actions on the part of this government that suggest that jobs are not their primary focus, and I think that's what Albertans would like them to be focused on. Even their response to the pandemic has resulted in a longer recession than we needed to have. By acting last and acting least, this government has prolonged the recession and slowed the recovery in Alberta, and that is a huge concern.

But to the bill before us, I think the concern is that this large and powerful tool has been rendered much less powerful in this current iteration, and that's a big concern, especially since it was rendered much less powerful by what I can only assume was a mistake on the part of the government, by failing to do anything to keep the previous version in force. I think that is a big concern. I think that the problem with this bill is precisely what the minister herself said, that it doesn't allow us every option available.

Add to that the fact that this isn't even the conversation we're having anymore. The Trans Mountain pipeline is going ahead. The conversation we're having now is a conversation about line 5, a conversation that could be significantly improved by this government and this Premier taking some ownership – taking some ownership – and saying: "You know what? Insulting people is not really the best way to negotiate, and it's not really the best way to govern. We're sorry." That would go, I think, a long way, and I think the unwillingness of this government and this Premier to support Albertans, to at least try to support Albertans with something as simple as an apology is shocking. It's genuinely shocking.

Those are my concerns with the current iteration of this bill, that, you know, this fight-back strategy – I mean, the UCP love to bluster

in the media, but when push comes to shove, they bring in a weakened version of this bill. They have an inquiry that is now not investigating anything, because the two principal claims have been reneged upon. They have a war room that is supposed to be this great, adaptable thing and instead spends its time stealing logos and impersonating journalists and attacking children's films. It just all adds up to a strategy that isn't working.

What I would urge the government to consider is a new strategy, because I actually think that we agree on the fundamental principle. We agree that the thing that we should be focused on is Albertans: their lives, their jobs, making sure that they can pay their mortgages and put food on their table. What we seem to disagree on is strategy, on how to get there.

I would suggest that our strategy has proven effective. We changed the minds of Canadians outside of Alberta about pipelines. We had a pipeline approved. That pipeline is being built. It will take our product to market. It will have positive impacts all over the province. By contrast, we have this fight-back strategy on the part of the government that has caused international embarrassment, that has driven away international money, that has resulted in net job losses before the pandemic even hit, that has resulted in a longer impact of the pandemic and therefore a longer recession and a slower recovery, and all of that adds up to negative impacts on the lives of Albertans, on their ability to get jobs and their ability to live their lives.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mrs. Allard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to rise this afternoon and to offer my support for Bill 72, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. I'd like to just start off by thanking my friend and colleague the hon. Minister of Energy for introducing this important piece of legislation. The oil and gas sector represents a vital part, obviously, of Alberta's economy and a pillar of economic activity in my region of the province and, of course, in my constituency of Grande Prairie, so this bill is particularly relevant to my constituents. Just two years ago approximately a quarter of Alberta's oil and gas sector was located in the greater Grande Prairie area. While the economy has suffered since with the global pandemic and the world oil crash, those figures show how important this industry is to my riding and to the folks who call Grande Prairie home.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is important to all Canadians if they really think about that when Alberta wins, Canada wins. I want to begin by simply looking at the name of this bill, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. It's not just Alberta's. This bill is not a protectionist policy designed to make life better here and throw other parts of the country to the wolves, not at all. No, it's quite the opposite. In fact, here in Alberta we know that when times are good for us, the whole country benefits, and we are happy to celebrate that. Again, I'll say, to put it plainly, that when Alberta wins, Canada wins.

Of course, the hon. minister mentioned that this legislation is just one tool in a broader strategy to support Alberta's oil and gas industry, just one tool in a broader strategy to preserve our rights as Albertans to develop our economy and our resource sector. Members opposite have recognized that as well, and I appreciate that.

I'll just give a little bit of history. During the oil boom, when jobs were in abundance, tens of thousands of Canadians from every corner of this great country came to Alberta to join in on the prosperity. Often they would travel home and invest their hard-

earned money into their local economies as well while others chose to stay and make a new home here in Alberta. I believe this is a testament to the Albertan spirit of generosity and of welcome. It does not matter where you're from. Anyone can come to this province, and if they're willing to put in a hard day's work, they can certainly support themselves and earn a great living. I'm no exception, Mr. Speaker. In 1997 I had the pleasure of moving to Alberta from British Columbia. I, too, am a transplant and a proud one at that. I love Alberta. I love being from Alberta. I'm happy to call Alberta my home. Originally born in Yukon, educated in British Columbia, and started my business life in British Columbia. It's been a tremendous pleasure and honour to become an Albertan, and I'm so grateful for this province and her people, in particular the good people, again, of Grande Prairie that welcomed us with open arms back in 1997.

My husband and I and, back then, our soon-to-arrive first-born, who I can't believe is already 23, came to Alberta with a work ethic and a dream. We had that work ethic and that dream in British Columbia, but it didn't quite pan out the same as here. True to the Alberta advantage, we have been rewarded for our efforts over the past 24 years here in Alberta, which is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I ran for public office. My service in this House is one way that I conceived of giving back to the province that's given my family so much, recognizing a debt of gratitude to Alberta and in particular to my city of Grande Prairie.

How is it, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta afforded my family such a differential? It's the same family, the same training, the same drive, the same ambition, the same business, in fact, the same everything, but quite a different result here in Alberta. Well, I would argue that there are a number of factors, not the least of which is what I would call the Alberta advantage. I believe the Alberta advantage is something that we all in this House want to fight for, and this legislation is just one piece of that puzzle, just one tool in our arsenal.

3:20

I just wanted to talk a little bit about what Alberta contributes to Canada, not only in terms of GDP but in terms of opportunity. I'm just one story, one example of many who have come here and found a tremendous blessing and an upside to being part of the Alberta advantage. Despite accounting for approximately 11 per cent of the national population, in 2019 Alberta contributed almost 20 per cent to the federal GDP. In comparison, Quebec, with double the population, roughly contributed the same GDP, so with twice as many people. British Columbia has about 600,000 more people than we do here in Alberta, and their GDP was over \$100 billion less. I would say, based on those statistics, that we more than pull our weight, Mr. Speaker, and it's largely, though certainly not entirely, thanks to our resource sector. The resource sectors in aggregate account for approximately 17 per cent of our provincial economy, the largest subsector by far being oil and gas.

Given all this, Mr. Speaker, you can see why it's so frustrating that the federal government and other provincial governments have put up many roadblocks to the export of Albertan resources. Other provinces whose own economies rely on Alberta energy have time and again blocked the development of critical infrastructure that will benefit their own provinces and economies, thereby creating more expensive and less efficient modes of export. I'm not sure how this serves anyone. I'll tell you quite frankly: it doesn't. It doesn't serve the economy. It doesn't serve jobs. It doesn't serve the environment. Simply, it doesn't serve the future. Where do the airports and gas stations of eastern Canada think their fuels come from?

Enbridge line 5 has been making a lot of news lately, as members opposite have spoken about. It supplies 50 per cent of the fuel refined in Quebec and 100 per cent – 100 per cent – of the jet fuel used by Toronto's Pearson International Airport, yet for some unknown reason many Canadians would seem to prefer to buy their energy from Saudi Arabia or Russia or Venezuela. I just don't see the logic in that, Mr. Speaker. What other country would so deliberately cut off their nose to spite their face? I just don't get it. When is the rest of Canada going to realize that it depends on Alberta energy and that a strong Alberta economy leads to a strong Canadian economy?

Which brings me back to the bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 72. While I do indeed support this piece of legislation, I pray that it never need be invoked. As members opposite have mentioned, that is a last resort, not a first resort. As the minister has mentioned, that is a last resort, not a first resort. This bill has been deemed the turn-off-the-taps bill and, if passed, will grant greater authority to Alberta to control the amount of crude oil and other resources leaving the province, whether it's by train, truck, pipeline, or other means. This drastic last step – and I'll say it again; it would be a last step – would virtually halt Canada's economy and cause massive shortages of fuel throughout Canada and parts of the U.S. It's serious, but it demonstrates just how serious Albertans are about our right to develop our own resources and economy, a right that we fought hard for, and we have previous generations to thank for that.

Just as we have previous generations to thank for that, I want future generations to thank this Legislature for the work that we do to preserve their advantage for their future as well. I believe that with this economic downturn and all the challenges that we face with COVID-19 and all the challenges that we face with the world oil price crash, we have a responsibility. It is incumbent upon us, then, to fight for the future of our province, the future of our children and unborn grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to sugar-coat this. Like I said, I do sincerely pray that the authority granted by this bill is never needed. I hope it will serve as a wake-up call to the rest of Canada to demonstrate just how serious Alberta is about getting a fair deal.

I also believe the minister when she says that there were some problems with the previous bill and that we chose to allow that bill to lapse under the sunset clause to reintroduce it with refinement. I want to thank the minister and her department. The bureaucrats who worked on this bill did a tremendous job of repairing it.

I hope that the rest of the country will see how graciously and generously Alberta has welcomed hundreds of thousands of immigrants and Canadians from other provinces to gainful employment, myself included, and how Alberta has been there to support other provinces through their tough times. I hope, Mr. Speaker, they start to return the favour and start to show up and be willing to support us through our tough time. This is not about one province's interests being pitted against another's. Alberta energy, as I've said many times in this speech, is good for Canada, and if it takes turning off the taps to get that point across, then sadly that is what we'll be empowered to do through this bill. I really hope it doesn't take that.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members opposite and the previous Alberta government for introducing similar legislation, as the previous speaker talked about, back in 2018. This Bill 72 is a very similar bill to the NDP's Bill 12. I expect the current members of this Legislature, the current sitting members of the NDP, will offer the same support this time around. I hope they will. I don't know if there's ever been a time in our province's history where two consecutive governments from two different parties with often very differing views have agreed on the right move for the

province, and I am proud that such a level of common understanding and camaraderie and bipartisan agreement, I hope, can be found on this bill in service to a strong Alberta for all of us, for all of us now and for all of us going forward.

Now, when our government campaigned on the promise to uphold and strengthen Bill 12, the CBC reported that, quote, Alberta will lose this case. They claimed that it would be unconstitutional. They claimed that turning off the taps would never hold up in court. The CBC even interviewed a law professor from the University of British Columbia, my alma mater, who said: "I can say with absolute confidence that Alberta will lose this case." Well, Mr. Speaker, tell that to the Federal Court of Appeal, which upheld Alberta's right to do exactly that. I don't believe that B.C. and Quebec really think that they can force Alberta to export resources and only embargo Albertan oil when it suits them. I don't believe that. I'm a card-carrying optimist. I'm sure that there's another reason for this behaviour, and I hope that it will change. The free market is built upon the free exchange of goods and services, and if Alberta doesn't want to trade anymore, then that is completely our prerogative.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 72 is constitutional and certainly as presented with these refinements even more so. The idea behind this bill has seen broad support from differing political backgrounds, and it's our best and last resort to getting a fair deal for Alberta from the federation. I love Canada. I love this country that I was born in and have had the privilege to have known my whole life, and I'm proud of this country. I'm also, though, tired of Ottawa and other provinces thinking they can insult our workers and our industries in the oil and gas sector while simultaneously benefiting, while simultaneously running their own economics off our energy at their convenience. It must go both ways. I'm tired of this narrative, this one-way narrative.

I'm calling for a united Canada. I'm calling for a Canada that stands up with Alberta, just as Alberta stands up with Canada. It's time for Alberta to take bold action to receive a fair deal. As I've said, this is just one piece of that puzzle. I believe that Bill 72 is a timely piece of legislation to do exactly that. I want to thank the hon. minister once more for introducing this bill, and I would like to encourage all members of this House to support this piece of legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should there be any takers for questions or comments.

Seeing none, I believe the individual who caught my eye is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will express that any opportunity we have to talk about jobs and to talk about the resources we have here in Alberta and what we're doing to make sure that Albertans get full value for those, what we're doing to make sure that Albertans have opportunities to benefit today and tomorrow from them, I'm happy to engage in that discussion.

I don't believe that Bill 72, though, which is titled Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, is robust. I don't believe that it will actually create conditions to improve the lives of Albertans. There was a bill, as my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View mentioned, that was passed in the time when we were in government, the NDP, and that was proclaimed by the UCP in supporting the bill that we had brought into place. It did have an expiry date, and that date has now been reached.

3:30

The government appears to have worked quite hastily to bring in something to try to give the impression that they were playing tough, that they were fighting for working people, that they were going to do something to address the significant economic insecurity that so many families are experiencing, that they were going to do something to try to result in at least one of the three pieces of their platform, the core of their platform, the part that they stuck on placards everywhere they went and that they put in their ads, so of course Albertans remember. They promised to deliver on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. Objectively, they have failed on all three.

While I am glad that we have seen and continue to see progress on Northern Gateway, a project that was really a focus of our government . . .

Member Ceci: TMX.

Ms Hoffman: Trans Mountain. My apologies. Yeah. Thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo for the clarity. Trans Mountain.

The importance of making sure that Trans Mountain got new product to tidewater was a focus, and Trans Mountain was the reason why we originally brought through the bill that the government has now let expire. The reason why we brought it through at the time, as was said, was because we were engaging with Canadians from coast to coast to coast to create greater understanding and enthusiasm for the opportunities that would come for all Canadians and especially for Albertans by being able to access tidewater and for the first new pipeline to tidewater in decades for the people of Alberta.

What the government here, the current government, has done is bring forward new legislation that is far, far weaker. It is limp, and it doesn't have the impacts. The primary impacts around the bill, when we brought it forward, and the rationale the government gave when they proclaimed it were to ensure that consumers in B.C. understood the implications of having the taps turned off. Of course, for consumers the main product that they acquire from pipelines is refined fuels, so if your target actually was to influence everyday Canadians, taking out refined fuels fails to do that because that's what people actually consume; that's what people use on a day-to-day basis. If that was what was being impacted, then Canadians would notice if the taps got turned off. But this government has decided to bring forward a far weaker, less impactful piece of legislation.

It probably shouldn't shock me at this point that this government tries to be a lot of talk but isn't really much action. We've seen that in how this government handles many issues, including the so-called energy war room and their fight-back campaign. It has been more of an embarrassment and more of a mockery than an effective communications tool. It definitely hasn't moved hearts or minds outside of Alberta, unless we're talking about moving people to watch children's shows on Netflix that they're trying to pick fights with. It moved viewership. It moved that. I don't know that it moved hearts and minds, but it moved viewership. It also moved some of the comedic writings in Alberta and across Canada with the response to the plagiarized logos. And it definitely made people distrusting of phone calls they get from so-called reporters, having learned that folks who work there were impersonating professionals in the media in an attempt to gain further access and influence.

So I wouldn't say that the government's attempts through the energy war room have done anything to move hearts and minds or increase credibility for everyday Albertans, and that's who we come here to stand up for and to advocate for. It certainly has given some very sizable paycheques to a select few party insiders. It

certainly has given job security for those party insiders who were hoping to have a role with this government after the election, but it hasn't delivered for Albertans.

What a costly game to play with taxpayers' money, to invest \$30 million a year when that money could be used for so many other beneficial things that would help all Alberta families, things like having an emergency remote home learning fund to support families who are dealing with, so far three times, a forced isolation, with children being sent home from school because the government failed to keep them safe and to keep schools operating during this global pandemic. Or how about addressing infrastructure needs that we have? I'll touch on another one with schools that a lot of people are raising, and that's around HVAC systems and making sure that air quality is safe and that air is moving so that schools can be sanctuaries that stay open to help students and families during this difficult time.

Or how about supports for small businesses, small businesses in communities right across this province who've struggled, especially during this pandemic, but have struggled? When the current government said that they were going to bring in all of these great supports for business, it clearly was for large profitable, mostly multinational businesses. It wasn't primarily for local small employers. They didn't qualify unless they made profits in excess of half a million dollars a year. They didn't qualify for any of those dollars, the \$4.7 billion that was given away to large profitable corporations. They didn't qualify for the money that this current government chose to invest in and gamble on the re-election of Donald Trump. Small local businesses didn't benefit from that, and I will argue that if the impact of this bill was to be to have a piece of legislation that could be used to remind Canadians across the country of the importance of Alberta's energy products, Canadian energy products, then refined fuels had to be a part of it, and they aren't.

This legislation continues to carry on the tradition that we've seen with this government around making big promises and significantly underdelivering. As was said, if the goal now is to do something around line 5, we know that for Trans Mountain the work that was done in the four years while we were in government got this project from having I think it was 30 or 40 per cent approval Canada-wide to 70 per cent approval. The work that was done in a civilized, respectful tone but also by bringing forward legislation that actually had real-life impacts on families across Canada: that actually created an environment where Canadians were more receptive to our energy products.

Instead of taking the effectiveness of moving that project forward and trying to figure out how to apply it to other projects, including the work that's being done under line 5, the Premier decided to act, for somebody who preaches about decorum and civility, in a very uncivilized and undignified fashion. To name-call jurisdictional leaders who have a significant impact on the prosperity of Albertans is not wise, Mr. Speaker. It's not wise for the Premier to call names to people who should be partners in helping us provide energy, much-needed energy, for a significant portion of North America. The UCP has continued to exercise a lack of judgment and lack of backbone.

3:40

In terms of some of the other track record pieces prior to the engagement of Bill 72, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, just to set the stage, again, those three things were jobs, economy, and pipelines. On the jobs record, even prepandemic, of course, we know the pandemic has been very, very hard on many families. Even before the pandemic this government was headed off

a cliff in terms of that commitment, that job promise. They were down more than 50,000 jobs before the pandemic hit.

In Alberta we've seen the worst drop in GDP of any jurisdiction in the country, 8.2 per cent. That is certainly not good economic news, an objective measure of the failure of this government to protect our GDP. Even if we were somewhere in the middle of the pack, then they could blame it on COVID, right? They could say: everyone in Canada is experiencing this; this isn't just us; this is a tough time. But nobody in Canada is experiencing it in such a significant way, 8.2 per cent. Nobody is experiencing the kind of significant hardships on such a scale to our economy that we are here in Alberta under the leadership of the UCP. Bankruptcies for consumers are up 10 per cent. Again, that is not a good sign for the economy.

Then here we have, again, a government that likes to posture and likes to make grandiose announcements without having the substance to actually deliver on the pillars. So what do they do? They appoint Steve Allan. They send him out to do his inquiry and write a report, and they give him one extension. They give him two extensions and three extensions, and now we're at four extensions. Now, I remember my parents saying: fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. The government has been fooled four times.

Former supporters, quite loud, prominent supporters of this government, people who were at the table trying to help them deliver on their three significant priority promises, have certainly deviated from where they were just a few short years ago. Donna Kennedy-Glans, for example, has taken very loudly to social media to absolutely call on the Energy minister to pull back the curtain. The Energy minister threatened to pull back the curtain yesterday. It seems that a lot of Albertans would like to see some transparency and some accountability. Of course, the energy war room, the minister and government and, in turn, all members of the UCP and former members of the UCP have brought forward clauses so that the energy war room can't have the curtain pulled back in terms of accountability to the Auditor General. There won't be public oversight. There won't be FOIP oversight. FOIP oversight, rather; I don't recall the piece around the Auditor General, but I do recall the piece around FOIP and not allowing for transparency or the curtain to be pulled back on that embarrassment. Of course, one has to wonder why the government has continued to give extension after extension after extension after extension for the inquiry that's currently under way. Many believe it's because the government isn't happy with the findings.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung has risen.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of comments and questions to ask the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who so eloquently detailed the juxtaposition between the similar legislation that our past government had in place on this important matter and the current Bill 72, that is now before the House. Of course, the government believes that their bill is one that is functioning better than the one that we had in place. However, I beg to differ.

I really look at some of the differences that these two pieces of legislation have and particularly the measure where the Bill 72 before the House removes the section on refined fuels. Indeed, this, of course, was the strongest message to B.C. residents and the government of British Columbia that the previous legislation had in terms of its ability to easily be understood by travellers, people who drove vehicles, people who'd be consuming those fuels that were carried in the pipeline, the strongest message to them very clearly conveyed by this section on refined fuels. It is now taken out of Bill

72, that's before us. That was a section that was a very easy way of communicating the consequences of not supporting the pipeline.

I wonder if the Member for Edmonton-Glenora would like to perhaps take a look at that measure juxtaposed against the past piece of legislation, wherein refined fuels were exempted from the current legislation, and see if there are any other differences that are really jumping out at her to highlight how diluted the current legislation is compared to the legislation that our past government brought forward.

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly, the biggest flaw in this bill – “flaw” minimizes it. It's such a significant omission, really. Really, the primary intent of the legislation was to create something that could have an impact on everyday consumers. Everyday consumers rely on refined fuels from this province and from other jurisdictions. Everyday consumers aren't going to the gas station to buy bitumen, right? So when this government chooses to take out the primary crux of the legislation from the bill, it really leaves behind a bill that is simply window dressing. It leaves behind a bill that is so weak and so obviously intended to posture for the government without actually having any impact with the actual legislation.

This isn't the first time we've seen this from this government. They have brought in a number of pieces of legislation or public policy that say one thing and actually do something far weaker. Some of the impacts of that, of course, have been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, that has stretched on for far, far, far too long. And while many Albertans are still processing today's announcement, they also are being cautious and watching what's happening locally and internationally. For the government to continue to bring forward bills in this House and try to tout that they're being tough on – you fill in the blank. But when you actually start looking through the legislation itself, you see that it is a tale – somebody once said that it's like trying to talk out of both sides of your mouth, or something that often gets said, where you're posturing in one direction, but you're actually delivering something far weaker in another direction. There are other phrases that have been used as well, but maybe I'll rest with that one, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that this is certainly the biggest shortcoming in this legislation, something that – and I imagine that somebody probably advised: well, it'll be . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has risen to debate.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Bill 72, the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, introduced by the Minister of Energy. This piece of legislation renews a previous version of the act with the same title. Initially, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, turning off the taps, gave the Minister of Energy the authority to require a licence before authorizing the export of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels. It expired on April 30, 2021.

This new act will renew some measures from the previous Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, including essential but minor adjustments to increase the legislation's legitimacy and to ensure that it is more constitutionally sound. These changes were recommended by Justice and Solicitor General to address potential constitutional concerns if the legislation is ever implemented.

3:50

In 2018 Bill 12, the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, was passed by the previous NDP government but never enacted into law under their leadership. This bill was the centre of a constitutional challenge between Alberta and B.C. The act would have allowed Alberta to restrict the flow of oil and gas into B.C. if the B.C. government continued to try to block the Trans Mountain pipeline's progress. The original piece of legislation left many gaps allowing for legal challenges. It proves, with the ineffective language used for the original bill, that the NDP was never serious about protecting Alberta's interests or getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built.

Today our government prioritizes Alberta and Albertans by focusing on our constitutional right to manage our natural resources. For these reasons, I believe that the renewal of this legislation is fundamental in the interests of Albertans and Alberta's natural resources.

As with the original legislation, this act gives the government the authority to require companies to obtain a licence before exporting crude oil or natural gas from Alberta via pipeline, rail, or truck. Under section 92A of the Constitution the provinces may make laws concerning the primary production of nonrenewable natural resources. Updates to the previous legislation include specifically removing all references to refined fuels, which will strengthen the legislation in the face of further potential legal challenges. However, there are no tangible impacts to industry or other jurisdictions. The gaps left by the NDP's previous legislation allowed us to identify where the legislation could be improved to prevent future challenges.

The goal of this legislation is a matter of ensuring we have every option possible to defend Alberta. We do not intend to use the authority provided by this piece of legislation. If the use of this legislation is required, it would be a final step in defence of Alberta's interests. We will continually seek the path of diplomacy while assertively protecting our economic interests.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have fought long and hard to win the constitutional right to manage our natural resources. This new legislation signifies how serious we are about defending our rights and commitment to protecting the value of Alberta's resources. This act will improve upon the expired Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act by removing refined fuels from the act.

Bill 72, the renewal of the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, allows for proactive legislation to protect Albertans and our natural resources. We are strengthening our defence against any possible legal challenges in the future. Changes will increase the legitimacy of the legislation by making it more constitutionally sound, providing essential and effective language changes left out by the previous government. This legislation demonstrates that we remain committed to preserving the value of our resources and will ensure that we have every option available to us to defend Alberta, our economy, our resources, and our people.

I call on members to support Bill 72 as it allows for protective legislation to protect Albertans and our natural resources. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Yes. I just listened to the previous speaker, and I'm just kind of shaking my head at some of the things that were mentioned, particularly the comment about diplomacy, Mr. Speaker. I remember the Premier of this province calling the governor of Michigan brain-dead. I'm not sure where that fits into

the member's understanding of what diplomacy is, but it seems pretty far from it. Perhaps she can take the opportunity to explain how that comment fits in with what she just read.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the point about the previous NDP government never being serious about getting TMX built. What we did, not unlike what the government is doing now, was that we brought forward a bill, let B.C. know at the time that that was the problem, the roadblock, if you will, to getting a pipeline to tidewater, let the government of B.C. and the people of B.C. know that we were serious about shutting off the taps. We had legislation in place; we would use that legislation. It turns out that it created – and my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View had the timeline down, expressly talking about how the federal government stepped in to address the need for a pipeline to tidewater through TMX.

Mr. Speaker, the room created by the actions of the previous NDP government assisted the federal government in being able to act, act in a way that they purchased all of the equity from the previous owner of TMX. They continued to negotiate. Actually, mayoralty candidate Amarjeet Sohi was tasked with going across the province of B.C. meeting with hundreds of stakeholders and spending months and months and months to share with them what the federal government's plan was to get that pipeline to tidewater. Lo and behold, because of the actions of this previous NDP government, because of the actions of the federal government, the TMX pipeline is under construction and due to go to tidewater and be completed in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I just really need the member opposite to explain how her government has been diplomatic when dealing with the issues of the threat to the line 5 pipeline, because I don't think that that can be explained as diplomacy. I would appreciate it if that member could also explain how the result of TMX being purchased and under construction is not in part because our government put that Bill 12 in place. Bill 12 gave the time and energy, the push for the federal government to undertake its work, which ultimately will be to the benefit of all Albertans. Perhaps she could do that.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available, and I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan has risen, with about a minute left.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About a minute, you said? Okay. I'll quickly go through some comments.

I find it interesting, the member opposite speaking about diplomacy and name-calling, this coming from the members opposite, who called Albertans sewer rats and embarrassing cousins. I find it interesting, the member opposite talks about how they supported oil and gas and pipelines as our Minister of Energy has spoken numerous times about how the former Premier sat in the Prime Minister's office on the day a pipeline was killed. I find it interesting how the member opposite talks about how their government supported oil and gas and pipelines when there are numerous, numerous, numerous examples of their members actively participating in antipipeline, anti oil and gas protests. If Albertans thought for a minute that the members opposite honestly supported oil and gas and pipelines, then they'd still be sitting on this side.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

We have about five seconds left.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to join the debate? I see the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has risen.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide some remarks on Bill 72, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. I want to begin by thanking the Minister of Energy

for putting this legislation forward. On September 21, 1902, the first oil well in western Canada, known as the Lineham Discovery Well No. 1, near Waterton, struck oil for the first time. It produced oil at a rate of about 300 barrels a day. That day was a day that changed the course of Alberta's future.

Today Alberta produces an average of 2.8 million barrels per day. The Alberta oil sands are the third-largest reserves in the world after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Those two countries have higher CO₂ emissions than Alberta. In 2017 approximately 140,000 people were employed in Alberta's upstream energy sector. The responsible development of oil sands is a key driver of Alberta's and Canada's economy. It creates jobs and tax revenue for government, which supports the social programs and capital infrastructure projects we rely on.

4:00

Time and time again we see other provinces try and undermine Alberta's constitutional right to develop and export natural resources, particularly within the energy sector. Albertans fought hard to win the constitutional right to manage our own resources. Our legislation demonstrates how serious we are about defending these rights and Albertans' interests in the resources they own. When we were elected in 2019, our government made a promise to Albertans that we would be committed to protecting the value of our resources, and we will ensure that we will have every option available to us to defend Alberta, our economy, our resources, and our people. This legislation is one step closer to fulfilling that promise.

For Confederation to benefit all Canadians, it has to be an economic union that allows exports to happen without obstruction. The revised act has been further strengthened from the previous version to provide greater legal protection against court challenges. Mr. Speaker, I could list countless examples of times other jurisdictions, including the federal government, have attempted to stifle energy development in our province, but I won't do that because we all are aware.

The Federal Court of Appeal actually upheld the right for Alberta to have control over its resources, including turning off the taps when we see fit. In fact, the court stated that the so-called threat of constitutionality towards other provinces was merely theoretical. The reality is that the provinces don't have the power to tell each other what to do. The courts recognize that. We recognize that here in Alberta, too. B.C. doesn't have any power whatsoever in telling us Albertans what to do. They need our resources, yet they seem to enjoy placing an embargo on them whenever they want to score political points. Mr. Speaker, I actually find it concerning that they think that.

The Fair Deal Panel report says that Alberta should "collaborate with other jurisdictions to reduce trade barriers within Canada and pressure the federal government to enforce free trade in Canada." Free trade builds upon the principles of a free market, which enables the free exchange of goods and services. Bill 72 further enables Alberta to participate in the free market.

More important, Mr. Speaker, are the jobs of thousands of Albertans who rely on our oil and gas sector. This bill defends those jobs. It sends a message that Alberta is not playing around. It sends a message that Alberta stands up for its oil and gas industry. Bill 72 puts Alberta first. The powers vested in us under Bill 72 will be used as our last resort in ensuring that Alberta finally gets a fair deal from the federation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 72? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much. I do want to – you know, there's so much similarity between the governments, the NDP government and what we did around this issue and what the UCP government is doing or saying that they're doing about this. I want to go back in time to when we as a government were acting on this issue, Mr. Speaker, and I'd argue that we acted with more clarity and more force than the UCP government is doing today even though they talk a big game.

Back in Bill 12 days, in 2018, our government put out a press release, and it was called Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity. Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act is what this bill is called. The new legislation, which we introduced on April 16 back in 2018, we said, "would give the province the power it [needed] to restrict the export of natural gas, crude oil and refined fuels across its borders." We see that "refined fuels" was in ours. That was the threat or the big stick that really concerned a lot of consumers in B.C., the southern part of the province, because they knew that there were refined fuels going into the southern part of the province that they relied on for, obviously, their transportation needs and other things.

In the face of the ongoing challenges that we were experiencing from particularly the province of B.C. around threatening the construction of increased pipeline capacity, we acted to defend the industry, Mr. Speaker, and our Energy minister at the time, Energy minister Margaret McCuaig-Boyd, worked co-operatively with the energy companies. Frankly, we needed their co-operation because they were going to be taking the hit.

At the time Premier Notley said this about this bill. She said:

This is about protecting the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Albertans and our ability to keep Canada working.

That sounds very similar to what the Member for Grande Prairie was saying just a few minutes ago.

The Premier said:

It's simple – when Alberta works, Canada works. We did not start this fight, but let there be no doubt we will do whatever it takes to build this pipeline and get top dollar in return for the oil and gas products that are owned by all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, at the time it was seen that \$40 million a day in value was not coming to this province and the companies in this province because of the obstructions to the ability to build pipelines.

This press release goes on to say:

Roadblocks [that were] put in place by the [B.C.] government have caused uncertainty and hurt investor confidence, resulting in pipeline delays that have caused the Canadian economy to lose out on millions of dollars in revenue every day.

I just said that; \$40 million. And that was just to Alberta, Mr. Speaker. We know that the revenue that comes to Alberta does many good things. It builds our infrastructure. It assists in making sure that we have world-class hospitals and universities, something that side is taking for granted and not assisting with.

That revenue could have been used to build roads, schools and hospitals. These delays are also [impacting] the hundreds of thousands of jobs . . .

And we know that to be true.

. . . that help put food on the table

for Albertans across this province

and a roof over the heads of families across [this] country.

That's what the other side is saying. We know that Canada benefits as a whole when Alberta is working, so let's not kind of pretend that the previous government was not into understanding this and taking action, because it was.

The government made it clear through its throne speech,

that took place in the spring of that year,

that it would not hesitate to take bold action similar to the action former Premier Peter Lougheed took when Alberta's energy . . . was threatened in the past.

And we know that to be the national energy program, Mr. Speaker. Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act.

It is still called the same thing today, Mr. Speaker.

If passed, the legislation would give the government authority to, if necessary, require any company exporting energy products from Alberta to obtain a licence.

The same thing that's happening in this redux of our Bill 12.

Export restrictions could be imposed on pipelines, as well as transport via rail or truck

or other commercial conveyances.

This licence would be issued by the minister . . .

Same thing there; all that's going to be in regulations, we know, Mr. Speaker.

. . . if it is determined to be in the public interest,

which I still believe it is,

including whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on these resources produced in Alberta. Companies would not be automatically required to apply for an export licence and would only be directed to do so if the minister deemed it necessary.

4:10

This is kind of a blast from the past, Mr. Speaker, but it's the same thing as I hear from across the aisle today, and it was said three years earlier.

This is from the Energy minister, Marg McCuaig-Boyd, at the time.

Every day, we're leaving money on the table due to a lack of pipeline capacity, and that needs to stop. We've said all along there would be no surprises for our energy sector . . .

There will be no surprises, and that's because we work co-operatively with the energy sector, Mr. Speaker.

. . . and we've engaged with them throughout this process.

She goes on to say:

The powers in this legislation are not powers Alberta wants to use . . .

I hear the same thing on the other side. They talk about diplomacy, and they talk about, you know, "We'll have it in our back pocket, a tool in the tool box" and all that sort of stuff.

. . . but we will do so if it means long-term benefit for the industry, for Alberta and for Canada.

The Energy minister at the time, Marg McCuaig-Boyd, said those words.

We also needed to ensure that there was enough supply here for Albertans now and in the future, and companies that do not comply with the terms of the licence in the past, in 2018, could face fines of up to – oh, it's the same amount – \$10 million per day for individuals and companies. No. The individuals are \$10 million – oh, it is \$1 million. Okay. It's the same. Mr. Speaker, my point in reviewing the press release from 2018 is that the government of today is saying the same things that we said. We were standing up for the energy industry, and we did so because we knew the impact that not doing so would have on our economy.

Our economy is troubled right now, Mr. Speaker. My colleague talked about an 8.5 per cent drop in our economy, the largest in Canada. She also talked about the number of jobs that have been lost in this province. She also talked about – there was one more thing that she talked about. I can't see it right now. But we're struggling.

We did stand up for the energy industry in the past. We will continue to stand up for the energy industry on this side. TMX is under construction because of the actions that we employed to give

space and room for the federal government – and it wasn't a slam dunk. I mean, there were a lot of Canadians who didn't want the federal government to move into that space, but we showed over time how Canadians understood there was a need for safe, efficient transportation of these products, and if we didn't do it this way, it was going to be other ways that were less safe and less economical and would return less to Alberta and the companies that employed those conveyances.

Mr. Speaker, I guess that when I hear speakers from the other side kind of say categorically that this side did not care about the energy industry, I just think how wrong-headed that is. I can remember cabinet meetings where we spent time with department officials, working these issues out because of how important they were. We knew that we had to work with industry. We knew that we couldn't ignore the needs of industry because in doing so, we would be cutting off our nose to spite our face in this province. We didn't want to do that.

And we had many critics from our own support base who said: you know, this is not the NDP; don't do this. And we said: we are absolutely going to assist in the long-term prosperity of this province by ensuring that there are pipelines that'll convey this important resource to where it needs to get. Obviously, Asia was the goal because of the significant growth of the populations, the use of the production that took place in Alberta.

You know, my position hasn't changed on this issue, but I guess my feelings on not the issue but the people from the other side, across the aisle – like, they're not trying to win or influence this side at all. They're trying to say that we didn't care and we only did things because – I don't know. I don't know what the other side's position is very much on this, Mr. Speaker.

But I know mine is that I believe that pipelines are the way we need to ensure that we get product to market, and I'm going to stand up for that. The actions I took as a part of cabinet made sure that TMX got addressed by the federal government, addressed to the point where in the not-too-distant future it'll be completed. That will be a good thing for this province, and it happened under our government. It didn't happen under this government.

In fact – and my colleague talked about line 5. You know, I don't want to see line 5 stopped in any way, shape, or form. I know its importance to eastern Canada, but I would have gone – if I was in the Premier's shoes, I would have done things totally different. I hope he regrets the obstinance that he showed in that comment to the governor of Michigan. Like, that's not how you work with people across ideological or other divides. But it was, in this case – and the fact that it wasn't addressed by the member from Calgary that I stood up and asked 29(2)(a) of, I think, is an indication that there's no defence for it.

Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View did yeoman's work in laying out this argument. I will support this bill. I don't believe it's better, maybe a touch worse, but I'm not going to stand up and, you know, try and run down the other side because I think that. I'm going to say that we all need to hold hands on this. We all need to work together. We all need to protect the jobs in our energy industry. It's struggling. We need to ensure that the energy industry does a better and better job of taking carbon out of the barrel and reducing emissions, and that is what we need to work together on, Mr. Speaker. That's why when we had the turn-off-the-taps legislation, we kept it in our back pocket. We didn't have to use it. It was challenged, I know. If the other side believes that they have improved upon it, good for them. I beg to differ, but I think we're all agreed.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen, and I will allow her to please go ahead now.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely true that we've spent a considerable amount of time discussing the industry and how we could find ways to get full value and get as many jobs as possible for Albertans in Alberta rather than focusing on giving away cash to large profitable international corporations and then hoping that they might do something with it and then seeing them take that money and flee to other provinces and even other countries. So I appreciate that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has touched on the significant amount of time that was spent during the four years while we were in government to see the progress that we have experienced, specifically as it relates to Trans Mountain.

I remember the day that Trans Mountain got its approvals. We were in this place, and the – I'm not sure what role he had then – now Government House Leader did everything in his power to try to call points of order and stop us from being able to talk about the significant announcement that had just taken place. It was clear from the behaviour – and it's recorded in *Hansard* – that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was not in a position where he wanted to celebrate the significant progress with the government of the day, which was us. He wanted to find every possible way to distract and downplay the momentous announcement and the significant progress that Albertans had seen in the first time in decades with regard to a new pipeline to tidewater.

4:20

It wasn't just, you know, that one day that resulted in that action; it was many, many months and years of hard work, I imagine, some of the work from previous governments. I want to acknowledge that this wasn't something that we started from scratch, but we certainly had a significant deficit when only 4 in 10 Canadians were supportive of the pipeline that we were working particularly hard on, the shortest and most direct pipeline. Then we got that to 7 of 10, and we got new approvals.

I was thinking back on sort of: when did that start with our cabinet? When did we start working on that? I can't help but remember our first cabinet meeting. I imagine that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo probably remembers. While I won't go into details, I think we were public with who some of the stakeholders were that we met with. We met with indigenous chiefs, I believe, multiple chiefs. We met with the mayor of Calgary, we met with small businesses, and we met with CAPP at our first cabinet meeting in Calgary. First cabinet meeting, period, we went to Calgary, and we met with CAPP. I know that the current government likes to try to create revisionist history, but – I want to be very clear – that is a fact. That is a concrete memory and first step within just a few days of being sworn in, maybe three.

I also happened to visit the Tom Baker cancer centre, I think, the day before, maybe the morning of that meeting and had an opportunity to see how much the people of Calgary were owed and how much they were trying to contend with while providing excellent cancer treatment for folks in Calgary and area. A lot of folks in southern Alberta rely on the Tom Baker and even folks from parts of B.C. and Saskatchewan who come here for treatments. It was clear that we had to invest significantly in the health care infrastructure for the Tom Baker and that we also needed to do significant work on pipelines, specifically a pipeline to tidewater.

That was one of my founding memories of the first week of being in cabinet, the priorities that our Premier had set out for us and that

we were entrusted to deliver on. I have to say that the revisionist history that gets spoken of so frequently in this place – I just really needed to take a moment to put a little bit of reality back into some of the discussion and some of the remarks that we've heard from folks on the other side.

With that, I'd be happy to hear a little bit more from my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo about the priority of focusing on getting full value for our natural resources and good jobs for Albertans.

The Acting Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo with 20 seconds.

Member Ceci: Thanks. You know, I'll focus on the priorities that our Premier of the day put on that issue. Remember, she went across this country and spoke to – I don't know if they were hostile crowds, but they weren't crowds that wanted to hear about pipelines. She did that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 72, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, which was introduced by my colleague the hon. Minister of Energy. The oil and gas sector plays a vital role in our economy and employs countless Albertans. I'm proud to represent the riding of Camrose, which includes the town of Hardisty. Hardisty is a community best known as a pivotal petroleum industry hub where western Canadian select blend crude oil is produced and traded.

This bill has been introduced with the intention of supporting Alberta's resource sector and ensuring that hard-working Albertans can maximize the fruits of their own labour. The economic prosperity act will safeguard this essential sector and ensure Albertans' ability to export resources in order to reach the Canadian and global market. Bill 72 empowers Albertans to fight back against other jurisdictions that attempt to unconstitutionally block our energy resources from being transported outside of Alberta and unjustifiably hinder our ability as a province to utilize our natural resources. It is worth reiterating that this proposed legislation is not meant to be utilized often. It is merely a final step that could be deployed in order to defend Alberta's interests. Albertans are entitled to have this safety enshrined in statute so that other jurisdictions know just how serious this province is about the right to maximize our resources and do so on our terms.

Mr. Speaker, our government promised to strengthen legislation on this topic while on the campaign trail, and that is exactly what this bill accomplishes. Previously there was some concern over the constitutionality of the proposed legislation. However, that is no longer applicable with this version of the bill. The division of powers established by the Constitution was intended to maintain a balance between federal and provincial powers, with this section 92 outlining the areas that the provinces have jurisdiction over, and this includes natural resources. Section 92A explicitly gives authority to provinces for the interprovincial export of primary, produced natural resources, and this legislation more closely aligns with this concept now, making it less prone to constitutional challenges in the future. This proposal of this bill is not focused on a particular jurisdiction. It will ensure that our province is equipped with a legislatively enacted method of dealing with conflicts that may arise in the future and provide Albertans with more autonomy on export of our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I will always take the opportunity to stand up for our oil and gas sector and to stand up for my constituents, and that is why I am proud to support Bill 72 today. If Quebec and B.C. wish

to embargo us for our commitment to our oil and gas sector, then I say: let the bastards freeze.

The Acting Speaker: I would hesitate to say that perhaps there was an aspect of parliamentary language there. Maybe I think that it would probably be an opportunity to apologize for the comment at the end there that you made.

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, I apologize and withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: We do have – 29(2)(a) is available, and I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has risen.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to respond to some of what we just heard in the content of it. The content said that there was a strong campaign commitment to enshrine in legislation the right to turn off the taps in a prolonged way, and I will say that the legislation that we had in place was different from this. This legislation is far weaker in that this legislation does nothing to actually address – if we were to turn off the taps, the folks who rely on those products rely on refined products. The jurisdictions that the member just specifically referred to are Quebec and B.C., but of course there are other jurisdictions as well.

I'm having a hard time not commenting on the contrast between referring to diplomacy and seriousness and what we just witnessed, but I will say that if your goal is to have impacts on the heating requirements, the fuel requirements for folks in other jurisdictions, they don't heat and fuel their homes or run their vehicles with raw bitumen. They do it with refined products. So to take the focus of what the speaker was just referring to when the speaker referred to people and their energy needs: to be phrased most politely, their energy needs are for refined products. If we are to take what the member just said as her intended purpose for why she's supporting this bill, I will assure her that this bill does no such thing. This bill will in no way address – if the government of the day, whatever it might be, chooses to turn off the taps, it will not result in the kind of consequences that she just said she hopes that they endure. Let's remember that as government urges you to vote for this.

4:30

Now, the government, I'm sure, believes that this will withstand more challenges because it is far weaker, right? When legislation is weakened, it is less likely to experience a challenge because it doesn't have the impact that it once did. The challenger has already achieved what they were seeking to achieve by the government coming in, rolling over, and giving a completely weak piece of legislation as opposed to the robust legislation that was brought forward by the previous government, under the NDP.

The UCP government, if we are to take what the previous speaker said as their campaign commitment, campaigned to be tough, campaigned to actually implement something that would have lasting legacy impacts for the energy needs of Canada, but then the government didn't do that. The government chose to bring forward legislation that doesn't address refined energy products, unlike the prior legislation that supposedly was campaigned on to have a more lasting impact. The simple conclusion would be: promise made, promise a terrible failure, significantly weaker; therefore, promise broken. If we are to look at the campaign commitments as the thrust, this bill falls far short of what the Member for Camrose said was campaigned on. I would ask all members to consider it.

I have every confidence that there were probably folks who advised the Energy minister and cabinet that by taking out refined fuels, this legislation would very likely not see a challenge, or if it did, it would be much easier to uphold. I believe that is probably

true, but then the bill doesn't achieve the intended purpose of actually addressing the energy needs of other jurisdictions, which is what the Member for Camrose just said the intended purpose is, to address heat, to address fuel that other Canadians rely on.

Is this bill a broken promise? Probably. Is this bill another example of failed leadership? Probably. Is this bill about creating opportunities for people to stand up and give impassioned speeches? Probably. But that's not why we're here; we're here to actually govern and to create laws for Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 72? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has risen.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, following from many of my colleagues. I've listened very intently to speakers on both sides of the House because, of course, there is some agreement here with this today. But I must say that in many ways my concern about this bill is that it's just simply another example of the flaccid leadership that we have seen from this government on the issues that they declare are important to them.

In this particular case we see that the problem is that the government didn't fully understand the intent and purpose and the usefulness of the previous bill. If they had left things as they were with the bill unproclaimed, they would have been able to use the bill as it stood for persuasive purposes to help them in the work to shift the sentiments around pipelines and the transportation of our natural resources throughout the rest of Canada. The value in the bill was persuasive rather than performative, and if they had left it at that, they would have been able to build upon the high level of success that was achieved under the Rachel Notley NDP government, wherein they . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, a point of order has been called. I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Point of Order Referring to a Member by Name

Mr. Schow: This is the second time this afternoon that I've heard members opposite use members' names in this Chamber, both referring to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Yeah. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo did it earlier, and then, of course, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford just did it as well. Maybe if we could just pay closer attention to what we're saying in this Chamber, that would be great.

The Acting Speaker: I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me, but I'm seeing some nods there. What I will do is that for all members in the Chamber, please ensure that while referring to members in the Chamber, you refer to their constituencies so as to reduce personalization of the debate.

If the hon. member could please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies. I felt I was referring to a previous government and forgetting that that still applies to the present Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I will proceed just to talk about the great success of the NDP government, which I'm sure the Government House Leader is most interested in hearing about.

I want to just talk about the fact that if they had understood the intent of the initial legislation here, they would have been able to achieve so much more than they did, but unfortunately they didn't understand the intent of it as being persuasive rather than performative. As a result, they engaged in, essentially, what was just sort of a premature proclamation of the legislation. If, instead, they had left the legislation as it was, passed by the House but not proclaimed, it would have had the force and power to influence other governments and to be a tool in the frigid waters of inter-governmental relationships.

I think that we have seen the difference between this government's approach and the previous government's approach. The previous government was able to use this type of understanding of the pervasiveness of legislation to go throughout the country and to shift all of Canada in the direction that we needed to have them shift in order for us to be successful here in the province of Alberta and to continue to provide success for all of Canada, as has been mentioned by members opposite on numerous occasions.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We see – the evidence was very clear – that the support for the TMX, Trans Mountain pipeline, rose from somewhere around 40 per cent to somewhere around 70 per cent in the time that the then Premier was going throughout the country, talking to people persuasively about the situation that we had in this province and therefore the situation we had in the country as a whole.

As a result of that very effective understanding of the functioning of government and the application of their intent to systematic work with the community to evoke a change in the direction that was desired by this province, we saw some great success, not only in terms of the much larger acceptance of the proposed pipeline but the actual agreement by the federal government to step in and to buy the totality of the TMX to ensure its ongoing work and future success. In fact, the only pipeline that has ever been successfully defended and continued in this country over the last number of years is the one that was recommended and supported through persuasion by the previous NDP government, in contrast to this government, who bring in legislation of this nature, which has no force because they've taken the heart of it out.

The force in this legislation was that we could turn to our neighbouring provinces and say to them that if they continued to hamper our ability to get our product to tidewater, they would then have to understand the consequences of not having the products available that they use on a daily basis. The inclusion of refined products in the legislation had the effect of telling people that it's not just some natural resource that you never see and you never have any relationship to, but it's the very products you use every single day in your home such as natural gas or in your vehicles such as gasoline.

4:40

As a result of the construction of that previous legislation we were able to make a strong argument that was demonstrably successful in terms of our measurement of the outcome, in terms of the acceptance of the pipelines across the country, and in terms of getting the federal government to successfully step in and participate in ensuring the ongoing continuance of the pipeline.

Contrast again to this particular government, who found themselves in a similar position but in this case struggling with line 5 in the United States. Their response, rather than to establish a strong, persuasive argument and to articulate that well with the people that we needed to have that conversation with, instead used the opportunity to berate and belittle the very people we needed to have a relationship with, calling the governor of Michigan brain-

dead. How do you expect the people that you want to have a relationship with and want to work together for the success of your citizens to be on your side when you react to them in this sort of outrageous manner? Again, what we're seeing is a government that really has demonstrated a long history of flaccid leadership and electoral dysfunction. I'm very concerned that the end product is we have a Premier and a government that is completely impotent in its inability to make changes and to influence the Michigan governor and others to come to a reasonable solution and a successful resolution of any concerns so that we can move forward.

This legislation is a complete demonstration of a lack of understanding of the intent of the work that was done by the previous government and the success that was achieved through that work. Instead, they went ahead with this premature proclamation when it was a much better tool as it stood, passed by the Legislature but not proclaimed. That, of course, led to a lawsuit, which has led to us being in this position where we're having to come back and try to make a new set of laws, largely because this government failed to take responsibility for the issue of the legislation and accidentally let it lapse. So here we are, after having had this kind of accident occur, coming back to the legislation, weakly doing what could have been done in a stronger way, weakly fulfilling the intent that was done in a profoundly more thoughtful way under the previous government.

I'm not wanting to oppose the legislation per se. I'm just wanting to express my disappointment in how poorly the process was governed here and how poorly it was brought forward and poorly implemented over the last number of years and the fact that we've been in this place where, again, this government, while they talk big, show very few results. They talk about building pipelines; they haven't built any pipelines. The only successful one we have was because of the support provided to it and the influence used by the previous government in this province.

We see them creating situations like the Allan inquiry, which has had four delays to write one paper. I was a past university instructor. I can tell you that at some point you lose so many points with each delay that finally turning out the paper is going to be fruitless because the penalties from each of the delays effectively bring you to a point of having a failing paper no matter how it is written, and that's exactly the situation we're in. No matter what the Allan inquiry says now, it doesn't mean anything. We all know that it was a failed process and that anything that comes out of this is merely an attempt to save face and not actually effective legislation with the intent of doing something constructive within this province. And not only delayed four times but over budget continuously.

Of course, we have the war room, which is a very similar and, unfortunately, a much more expensive failure by this government, another situation where their intention was not – whatever their intention was, it has not been fulfilled by this process. It's become literally an international joke to talk about this war room. They've demonstrated no actual results, even on the things they said that they wanted to achieve with this particular project here.

We're seeing again and again the failure of this government to really grasp the work that they have to do and to do it effectively, and the consequence is written in all the numbers. It's written in the numbers of the significant drop in GDP we experienced in this province, I think the greatest in Canada, at 8.5 per cent; the significant rise in unemployment that we've seen in this province, again perhaps not the highest level of unemployment but the second-highest, I believe, in the country; and the continuous credit downgrades that we've seen in this province as a result of the economic policies of this particular province. We see that consumer bankruptcies are rising. We see that businesses are struggling, you know, in part, of course, because of COVID but because this

government failed to step in to ensure their success during these difficult times.

Again, I just, you know, want to summarize that I think the issue here is that the government is impotent in its work. No matter what its intent, it cannot understand how work should be shaped and formed and conducted in order to achieve an end result and to achieve that result through thoughtful and forceful action that isn't clumsy and bulky and unproductive but, rather, is subtle, is persuasive, and achieves results. This is what I'd like to see. They've certainly had that demonstrated to them by the previous government. I think it's very important that they take the time, when they bring legislation into this House, to try to get it right and not always bring in these pieces of legislation that are just facile attempts at what they should have achieved.

I mean, the number of times I've found myself saying: "Look, it's not so much that I disagree with the legislation, but this is so sad. This is so weak. It's not what you could have done had you taken the time." I've done that, you know, continuously for two years. I could list the various acts where I've said: look, I would have liked to have supported this. Sometimes I do when it comes to the vote, but I do so thinking about what could have actually happened and has not happened. And this legislation fails, as all the others have.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone else has a brief question or comment for the member. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was intrigued by the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I think that he goes a long way to demonstrate that there is another way that things can be done, right? I know that sometimes we get sucked into this practice of political theatre, but we must remind ourselves that, at the end of the day, we're here for the economic, the social, and the political benefit of Albertans. It's very important that we focus on that, especially when it comes to issues like the one that we have before us. We have to do better. We have to do better for Albertans.

4:50

You know, there are a lot of comments being thrown back and forth inside this Legislature this afternoon, and I'll be honest: I know for a fact that they were taken out of context. They're repeatedly used in this House time and time and time and time again for the purpose of what I can only assume is political theatre. And, truth be told, for me, I find that it's almost – I don't even know what to call it, Mr. Speaker, but it's sad because I know that we can do better. I know that we're all honourable people who are trying to do our best in representing the ideology that we believe in, but we can do better, where we actually come into this House and we present facts, we present statistics, instead of taking comments out of context and lashing out with them.

Diplomacy is so important. You know, with all due respect to the Member for Camrose, when she says to let the b's – and you know what word she used – freeze, she's talking about other Canadians. She's talking about other Canadians that, from my perspective, are people that should be treated with respect and dignity. Yes, I can understand that they may be opposed to a particular stance that we have, but surely the way that we win them over is through dialogue, by having conversation, by sharing ideas, and starting from a place where we treat them with dignity and respect and engage them in a vision where we all participate and we all benefit from it. This is basically the way that I can complement the arguments that have been made by my colleagues on this side of the House. I know that the members on that side of the House know, and perhaps it is all

political theatre, but I really wish that we would do better inside this Legislature.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak briefly on Bill 72. I think we've had a lot of great conversation today. While I can appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie calling on all members of this Chamber to raise their level of decorum, I hope that that doesn't fall on deaf ears in his own caucus. The reality is that when it comes to diplomacy, I and, I believe, members on this side of the Chamber will take no lessons from members on that side of the Chamber. I find it slightly rich to hear members from that side talk about diplomacy given that they were unable to be diplomatic with their own constituents in the province, calling them the embarrassing cousin.

With that said, my remarks will be short.

Member Ceci: Good.

Mr. Schow: You're welcome, Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

With that said, my remarks will be short, but I think it's important to note that some things are worth fighting for. There's a time for diplomacy, and there's a time for action. I'm sure somebody said that, and that person was far more famous than I will ever hope to be or ever, frankly, want to be. It's dignity. What I'm fighting for here is dignity, the dignity of a well-paying job, of someone who is looking for work in this province. Alberta has been a beacon of hope and prosperity across this country.

I have countless friends and neighbours in this province, many of which came from out of province to work here temporarily and ended up staying forever, having kids, and their kids had kids. It's a beautiful story and one that I want to continue to see happen generation over generation.

Opportunity attracts talent, and when you have a province that is fighting tooth and nail to ensure the survival of one of its most vital industries, as we are doing, we must send a message that Alberta will defend its right to send its products to market and use every lever within our tool box to ensure that that happens.

Going back to dignity, the dignity of a job, Albertans, at least the Albertans that I know and in the Alberta way, have never asked for a handout. They've asked for an opportunity to do something great, and I believe that that's what we have in this province.

I've cited statistics, as recently as yesterday while speaking, that Alberta will lead the provinces in economic recovery. We've been attracting investment and continue to attract investment right here by companies around North America and around the world, looking at us as a great place to set up some roots and make a go of it. While these challenging times have affected everybody across the world, Alberta has done a great job, I believe, with our hon. Premier at the helm, of creating an environment where there is opportunity and where members from around the world, from North America and across the country can come here and enjoy the dignity of a well-paying job if they're looking for work.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 72 sends a very clear message that Alberta will fight for its resources, will fight for the jobs, and will fight for dignity.

With that, I will move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 64

81. Mrs. Savage moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 64, Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader outlined to the Assembly last night why Bill 64 must proceed in a timely manner, and those reasons still exist. We have now had 14 hours – 14 hours – of debate, and the opposition still doesn't comprehend the difference between the parks act and the Public Lands Act.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move Government Motion 81.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 81, pursuant to Standing Order 18(1), is debatable for the Official Opposition to have one speaker for up to five minutes. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues for indulging the five minutes to my responsibility. I have to say that the rationale that was given when the government chose to bring in closure on this same bill at a prior stage yesterday was not sufficient, in my opinion, and I don't believe today's rationale was sufficient either.

The government had a month between when we considered this bill last and when we are considering it today. Today they say that it is urgent, that there is a rush, that it absolutely can't see due process, that we absolutely can't take the time to actually give representation to an increased taxation, that we can't actually take the time to debate this in the Assembly because there simply isn't enough time. This bill needs to be proclaimed before the date that the government determined.

5:00

The government determined the date on which they need this to be proclaimed, the government determined the sitting days of the Assembly, and the government saw no progress on this bill over the last month because the government chose to go into hiding for a month.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that to return to this Assembly and within the first 27 hours bring in closure twice on the same bill I think is disrespectful to democracy. I think it's disrespectful to the traditions of this Assembly, and I don't think it meets the challenge of common sense and rationality for the government to say: "This is an urgent, pressing matter because we picked a date and then we chose not to have the Legislature actually debate this bill for a whole month, and now we're going to put handcuffs on democracy. We're going to put a stopwatch to democracy. We're going to say that this bill doesn't deserve fair and thoughtful consideration or an opportunity to have amendments considered on it in a substantive way." I think that that is disrespectful to constituents, constituents of the opposition and constituents of the government, who expect people to come to this place and do proper due diligence with every piece of legislation that comes before us.

We're not here to just give speeches and grandstand. We're here to actually bring in laws that will apply to more than 4 million Albertans today and many Albertans in the future. The bills we consider here have lasting impacts and lasting legacies on our province, and this bill, of course, the Public Lands Amendment Act,

2021, is a significant departure from the traditional practices of Albertans engaging and accessing their public lands.

To bring in increased taxation, a significant burden for many working-class families, through this bill and then to bring in closure twice in such a ham-fisted way – grade 6 students are the ones, I think, that MLAs most often speak to about the current curriculum and how it relates to democracy. When grade 6 students ask about how bills become laws, I talk about the tradition we have in this place and the various stages of readings and the fact that the government comes here with an idea but that every member has an opportunity to make that idea better. Every member has an opportunity to come here and engage in the legislation and propose ways to make it better.

But that isn't the case when the government brings in closure. We all know this, right? The whole intended purpose is to ram through the various stages without actually having due consideration for the ideas of members outside of cabinet, and I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's fair to the constituents of this province, the vast majority of whom are represented by members who don't sit around the cabinet table.

I imagine that there probably was some debate about this at the cabinet table because we all know that we hear speeches regularly about keeping taxes low, on the outside, in public, but the cabinet table certainly has found many ways to bring in new taxes, new fees, new levies. I imagine there was some debate at the cabinet table, but that debate deserves to see the light of day. It deserves to have its time in the Legislature to be considered, and the ideas, including amendments, absolutely should be part of a fair, open, and transparent democratic process.

I understand that the government picked a date and that they created a budget based on that date, but then the government decided to hide for a month, to hide from democracy, to hide from accountability, and that's not fair to the people of Alberta. The government absolutely should be enabling people to have their voices heard in this place, not stifling them.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a correction. That government motion is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 21(3), not 18(1), as previously mentioned.

Having said that, that has concluded the period of time allotted for debate on Government Motion 81.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 81 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:05 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Issik	Panda
Allard	Jones	Savage
Copping	Long	Schow
Dreeshen	Lovely	Schulz
Fir	Milliken	Sigurdson, R.J.
Getson	Nally	Smith
Glasgo	Neudorf	Toews
Goodridge	Nicolaides	Toor
Gotfried	Nixon, Jason	van Dijken
Hanson	Nixon, Jeremy	Yaseen
Horner	Orr	

5:20

Against the motion:

Ceci	Feehan	Hoffman
Dach	Ganley	Loyola
Totals:	For – 32	Against – 6

[Government Motion 81 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 64 Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments or concerns to be brought forward? We are currently on amendment A2. I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has risen.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A2: just so we're on the same one I'm reading – it doesn't have a number on it here; the page gave it to me – it is on substituting the following: "(i.1) fees related to the use or occupation of public lands if that use or occupation is for a period not longer than 24 hours."

The Deputy Chair: Absolutely. As proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Member Ceci: Sorry?

The Deputy Chair: Absolutely. It was proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Member Ceci: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Please, if you'd like, you can continue with comments.

Member Ceci: I will. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think there's great wisdom behind this amendment because what I understand it to mean is that day use for the enjoyment of public lands, which are owned by Alberta for the enjoyment of Albertans, would be free if I understand this amendment correctly. The reason I think there's wisdom behind this is because of what's been pointed out by my colleagues previously when in debate and most recently yesterday. As my colleague previously addressing the closure motion on this item, that was brought forward just 15 minutes ago – this government has had this bill before us since April 14, I believe, and we have expressed our lack of support throughout the time that we have debated this Bill 64, Public Lands Amendment Act, 2021.

My colleague the critic for Environment and Parks, from Edmonton-Gold Bar, has put a couple of amendments before us. This latest one is with respect to the enjoyment of public lands and not being charged for those public lands if you're there less than 24 hours during the day, day use. And I think we have to be really careful when fees are introduced on things that Albertans have enjoyed.

I hear repeatedly the minister of environment get up and say: well, you know, Albertans support this. What he's talking to, I believe, is a kind of failed representation of what Albertans truly

believe in that the study or the survey that he's depending on entirely is inadequate, I think, Mr. Chair. My colleagues have pointed out where that survey is overweighted, in terms of those who were surveyed, on income, age, and gender.

I conclude, as they would, that that data from the survey is not representative of Albertans and the demography of our province. We are younger than the survey was able to find Albertans to answer the survey, we are more culturally diverse than, again, the survey that the minister of environment is relying on, and we are not as well off as the respondents to that survey. I think my colleagues found that the survey participants – over half of those respondents were over the age of 45. We're younger than that. The median, the average age is 39 in this province. Sixty per cent were men. Obviously, that's overweighted – and many of those men are overweight – in terms of the respondents. Sixty per cent of the household incomes in that survey were over \$100,000, and we know that, of the household incomes, not 60 per cent are over \$100,000.

5:30

Mr. Chair, I disagree with the results that were attributed to all Albertans. I think what my colleague has done in terms of this amendment is to say that there will be impact on Albertans if the Public Lands Amendment Act goes through the way it is written here because there will be many families who don't fit the template of the respondents who are identified here. Many families then will think twice about whether they want to head to the mountains, the eastern slopes, to participate in a cost per person of \$20 a day for a three-day pass or \$30 a person for an annual pass.

Mr. Chair, I've spoken to this yesterday, and some of my arguments that I referenced were with regard to the previous work that I did when I came to Alberta. I worked assisting lower income Albertans to improve the quality of their lives through a variety of methods and a variety of abilities to assist with the basic needs and then the higher order needs that they as a family had. Usually it was families who, frankly, didn't get to the mountains because they didn't have the necessary monies and equipment and time and functional car. The mountains would have been a dream for them.

I remember very clearly interviewing one individual, a woman of about 55 years of age, who had been injured and was living on a type of welfare for those folks who are injured, income support for those who are injured; not expected to work I think it was called. Her income was about \$500 to \$600, maybe five and a half hundred dollars a month from that program. When I interviewed her for this article I wrote for a magazine in Alberta, she said that her dream was to have enough money to take a bus to Banff. I know that's not where we're talking about, but it's indicative of a person not having adequate funds. She wanted to be able to take a bus for the day to Banff, go to a Tim Hortons, have a coffee, have lunch, and then take a bus back. She did not have, obviously, the funds to plan her life in a way where she could enjoy the public lands on the eastern slopes. She didn't say that, but she would never have been able to enjoy the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains in the public lands area because she did not have the money to do that.

What my colleague has done, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, critic for Environment and Parks, is he's saying, you know, that if a person wants to go to the eastern slopes for the day, let's not charge them. Let's allow them a pass for 24 hours. Certainly, some of the experiences that I had as a young social worker in east Calgary and working with people with little or no personal income, on income supports – they would have benefited from the opportunity to go to the eastern slopes and not be charged for that period of time.

My colleague also pointed out that when you look at the fees that are going to be collected from the Kananaskis conservation pass that's going to replace the voluntary contribution that people gave over the winter to access the Kananaskis ski trails and you look at the monies that are anticipated to come in via this public lands amendment fee, the fees there: \$18 million when you combine those two. My colleague has gone through and identified that, really, we can only find about \$10 million of increased expenditures as a result of that \$18 million coming in. Where's the other \$8 million? I'd suggest that there's some latitude to give day-use users a break. Instead of those monies, that \$8 million, going into gen rev, some of it can be used to offset the public use for the day of the eastern slopes that are going to be covered by the public land use amendment act.

Just continuing on with this argument a little bit, Mr. Chair, I think that previous amendments spoke to a referral to a committee, and the reason for that was because we have a hard time believing that Albertans are onboard with paying for something that was free to the public, namely Peter Lougheed provincial park and Kananaskis and the eastern slopes. The information that it has been based on: as I said, I have some trouble believing that it's representative of all Albertans. Though the minister claims it is, it doesn't seem like it ticks off all the boxes for who Albertans are, and that's why we're trying to stand up for the diversity of Albertans, who, frankly, would find some difficulty, being pressed financially, to pay all of the various new charges that they're going to have to pay as a result of this government bringing in fees for things that we enjoyed in the past for free.

Mr. Chair, you know, previously I've said and my colleagues have also indicated that it wouldn't have to happen. User fees on this, that, and the other thing wouldn't have to happen if this government was more judicious with the way it gave up revenue, was more judicious in not expensing taxpayers' dollars on things that had no likelihood of taking place. I'm speaking, of course, of KXL, which was a gamble. We know that at least \$1.3 billion has essentially gone down the drain – not down the drain; gone to the company, the proponent, behind KXL. But we don't know if that's all there is or if there's going to be more in the future.

We know, of course, that the \$4.7 billion in lost revenue that this government undertook within days of getting power have not resulted in a situation that was claimed to take place immediately from the other side. "You know, we will shore up this province. We'll get the economy going again because those monies will be used by wealthy corporations to reinvest back into this province." Well, that has not happened, Mr. Chair. We've seen companies leave this province that received those monies, we've seen companies ensure that their shareholders' dividends have increased, and we've seen, like I said, that there's not been a judicious use or there has been a misuse of previous revenues to this province.

5:40

Mr. Chair, I don't think Albertans should be the ones punished for all of that, and that's what we are trying to ensure at least happens a little less as a result of this amendment, a little less fees will be collected, and those fees that are not collected, that support can be essentially passed on to Albertans who in the past enjoyed the use of those lands for free for any amount of time, or for unrestricted amounts of time is what I'm trying to say.

I want to just also, lastly, Mr. Chair, say that when we think about the importance of our outside or our areas that are in nature and wild, we know that there's a rehabilitative effect that being in nature has for humans, and I'm hopeful that the other side believes that at least for one day Albertans can go to the public lands, not have to pay, can enjoy all the benefits of nature, and if they want to stay

longer, then they would obviously be subject to an annual pass or a longer – I guess a day 2 and day 3 pass if they wish to go in that direction. That's what I hope the other side will agree to.

We certainly know that this pandemic, this time for Alberta has been difficult. Albertans like me and my friends have gone repeatedly to Kananaskis to ski and voluntarily contribute to the ski trail maintenance fee that was collected in the parking lots there or paid for online. We all took our cars, and as individuals we went out and met out there and safely, you know, with public health kind of conditions in mind, skied or snowshoed. I'd like to see Albertans continue those sorts of things, Mr. Chair, without having to pay for it for the day, so I'm standing up to support Albertans' needs for that and hope that the other side sees a benefit in it as well.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members looking to join debate on amendment A2? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm pleased to rise and speak to this amendment. I think, well, we have canvassed this bill somewhat, and now we will quickly bring it to a close because we have been time allocated. The amendment before the House is to sort of ensure that the fee doesn't apply to day use, which I think doesn't completely correct the bill that is before us, but it at least improves the bill that is before us. I think that any time we can make an attempt to improve something, we ought to do that. I would urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment because, again, it doesn't fix the challenge that is being created by this bill, but it does at least ensure that fewer people are affected by it.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak at length to this bill, and one of the things I noted was, you know, that a lot of people who maybe aren't of great means will utilize hiking areas as a means of recreation. In fact, I think probably for people who weren't doing that before, the pandemic has encouraged them to start doing that. I think for many people it has sort of reintroduced them to the wonders that we have here in Alberta, and I think one of the things that's worth noting is that, you know, when businesses are looking to headquarter here or looking to put sort of white-collar jobs, for instance, in downtown Calgary, one of the things they consider – because in a lot of cases those offices, the sort of administrative portion of the business, can be located in various different locations. One of the things that I've certainly heard from individuals when thinking about locating to Calgary is that the ability to attract employees because of their proximity to the mountains actually is a relevant factor. It's a relevant factor in employees choosing to work for that company, and it is therefore a relevant factor in the employer choosing to locate their business here.

So I think that steps we take to detract from that are going to be problematic. Certainly, I include in there, you know, coal development in the eastern slopes but also attempts to sell off our parks otherwise and attempts to sort of impose additional fees, because one of the things that we're trying to do as we work to diversify our economy is ensure that we are keeping here some good-paying jobs that require very specific skill sets. One usually achieves those very specific skill sets by attending university, and historically people who are attending university don't have a lot of money. In fact, that problem is likely to get significantly worse in the immediate future as tuition skyrockets 7 per cent a year every year under this UCP government. In addition, those individuals are paying more on their student loans.

So all around, those are people who are going to have even less money than they did, and now we're asking them to pay what may seem to you or me a comparatively nominal fee, but I think as legislators, as policy-makers, as members elected to this Chamber,

we should all be recalling that our circumstances are not the circumstances of everyone. In fact, I mean, we have always had a privileged position in this place, but now more than ever we have a privileged position in this place. In a time when so many Albertans have lost their jobs, we are all still employed. In a time when so many Albertans are struggling without income, we also have our full salary. At a time when many Albertans are struggling in the gig economy or because they don't have paid sick leave and they need to isolate or any number of reasons, we have those things, so now more than ever we ought to recognize that the fact that for you or me paying \$15 as a day-use fee isn't that big a deal – well, that may not be the case for everyone.

And that's exactly what this amendment aims to fix. This amendment aims at those sort of, like, shorter stay, 24-hour stay sort of situations. I think – yeah – it's a very good amendment. I mean, it will certainly still leave some problems. There will still be other aspects of this bill that continue to be problematic. One of the most problematic is that again the government has come in here and they have repeated over and over and over again: all of this money is going to go back, and, you know, there's a system by which this happens, and yada, yada, yada. But there is no legislated requirement for that, so that is a problem. I think the "trust us" argument is likely to fail with this government because they haven't demonstrated particularly trustworthy behaviour in the past. They have frequently said one thing and then done another or done one thing and have said another. Either way, it's not good, and it's the reason that Albertans would have trouble trusting that.

You know, I've heard members and ministers mention over and over again with respect to this bill, "Oh, well, like, this is the normal process, and you'll go to estimates, and you'll be able to see where the money went," except that hasn't proven to be my experience. I mean, certainly, when I was a minister, if someone asked me a question about where the money went, I felt that it was my obligation to answer that question. Unfortunately, we don't necessarily see that in the current crop of ministers. For instance, just recently at estimates I asked where \$19 million in other advocacy – and not, incidentally, money in the upcoming budget, not money that was about to be spent but money that was in the budget that was finishing and the year-end that was finishing that year. "Where was that \$19 million spent?" "Oh, well, I don't have to tell you that."

5:50

I mean, I guess you don't, but ultimately the taxpayers will decide whether they think it's appropriate for a minister to withhold that information from the public, and I don't think that they're well pleased. I certainly hear from a number of people in my office. I mean, I hear from people upset about various different issues. There is a lot of – well, I mean, this government is doing a lot of things without consultation or with consultation that is not valid consultation like, for instance, the coal policy, where we're consulting on coal but not on the environment or water, which are the things impacted by coal. The ability to separate those things mentally is like a trick of mental gymnastics that I find shocking and disturbing.

Anyway, my point is that the lack of financial controls is one of those things I hear from people about. Obviously, the war room was one of them. This piece around the other advocacy is another one. The massive gamble taken by this government with the money of the taxpayers of Alberta on Donald Trump's re-election to the tune of over a billion dollars is certainly one I have heard a great deal about.

I guess my point is that that justification, to me, rings false, and the reason it rings false is because I have experience with going into

estimates with this government and asking them to provide information on how they spent money, past tense, and they have just refused. You know, them saying, "Oh, well, don't worry; this is how we'll use it" and "Trust us even though there's no legislative mechanism that forces us to" and "When you ask us about it, well, then you'll be able to find out": well, none of that is consistent with my experience with this government, so that is why I continue to be troubled.

This amendment will not fix all of those problems, but, again, it will at least allow individuals to come in and to use their own backyard for a day without having to pay a fee. You know, there's been a lot of rhetoric bandied about in this place about how designating trails for one thing or another thing is somehow locking people out of their backyard, but for someone, for a family that is struggling because someone has lost a job or for a university student, a \$90 fee, a \$30 fee, a \$15 fee may in fact practically be locking them out. Failing to recognize that disproportionate impact is worrisome.

I mean, one of the things that drove me into politics was the failure of the government at the time, in 2014, failing to recognize that not everyone was affluent and that policies impacted people differently and sort of failing not necessarily to recognize it in all cases but maybe not acting on it necessarily in the ways I would have liked, relative, of course, to – well, hindsight being 20/20, I look back now on that government and think: I guess it could be a lot worse since that's what we're seeing here. But at the time it seemed certainly like we ought to do something about that.

That is what I would like this government to recognize in this bill with this amendment and in all other things, that different people have different circumstances, and those different circumstances mean that a policy which is on its face neutral will affect those individuals in different ways. If we don't think about that, if we don't, as people who are making these policies and passing these policies, consider those different impacts and those disproportionate impacts, we are going to create bad policy. That is exactly what is happening in this bill, so my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar has brought forward an amendment in an attempt to at least mitigate some of that impact, and I think that it would significantly improve the bill.

You know, there was a time in this place where opposition amendments were considered, where sometimes they were even passed. In fact, we were talking just earlier about an amendment that had been passed. I think – well, at some point I should look up the number, but in our term in government a number of different opposition amendments were passed – that was for various reasons – because I think we were willing to be reflective on our policy. Now, I mean, the members opposite, obviously, don't appear to have that desire to reflect on their policy on the basis of criticism, and that's, I guess, what it is, right? Everyone chooses to lead in whatever way they choose to lead. Personally, I think that strong leadership is significantly improved by having the humility to recognize that sometimes you haven't gotten everything right in the first instance. Obviously, the current members of the government wouldn't agree with that particular position.

But at the end of the day our wild spaces, our natural spaces in this province belong to the people of Alberta, and I would like them to continue to belong to the people of Alberta, to all of the people of Alberta equally, regardless of means, regardless of income, regardless of wealth and background and everything else, because it is our legacy. The land is in many ways our legacy, and it should belong to us all, and it shouldn't be based on how much money you happen to have at that time. It should be based on being an Albertan – that should be sufficient, being someone who lives here – and not even just Albertans; all Canadians, all citizens of the world who choose to travel here and who

choose to take advantage of our natural spaces. I think that no one should be prohibited on the basis of income.

I guess, for me, that value should flow through all of our policies: through access to our natural spaces, through access to education, through access to health care. I think, ultimately, what that does do is actually provide – there was an earlier discussion about equality of opportunity, and I think that failing to recognize that this neutral-on-its-face policy does not create equality of opportunity is extremely problematic on the part of the government. The way they

use that term generally is extremely problematic because the suggestion that we put in a \$15 fee, a \$30 fee, a \$90 fee . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt.

However, seeing that the time is now 6 o'clock, under Standing Order 4(4) we will now recess until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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