



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 1, 2021

Day 107

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 30th Legislature**  
Second Session

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

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

**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 3

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

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

## **Executive Council**

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

## **Parliamentary Secretaries**

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

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

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

Chair: Mr. Orr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

Eggen  
Gray  
Issik  
Jones  
Phillips  
Singh  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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

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

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Glasgo  
Gotfried  
Lovely  
Neudorf  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Sabir  
Smith

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

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Ceci  
Lovely  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Rutherford  
Shepherd  
Smith  
Sweet  
Yaseen

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

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

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

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Guthrie

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

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

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

Ganley  
Glasgo  
Goodridge  
Hanson  
Milliken  
Nielsen  
Orr  
Rowswell  
Schmidt  
Sweet

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Ganley  
Getson  
Guthrie  
Issik  
Loewen  
Singh  
Turton  
Yaseen

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, be seated.

### Members' Statements

#### Job Creation

**Mr. Bilous:** Two years ago this Premier loaded up his blue pickup and jaunted around Alberta, promising jobs, economy, and pipelines at every stop. His announcements were done at a podium with a sign that declared: jobs, economy, and pipelines. He promised Albertans that if elected, he would create jobs. He promised 55,000 new jobs, economic growth, and new pipelines. But the shine has come off the pickup, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have seen that this Premier was simply perpetuating a ruse to win votes.

There was no actual plan to create jobs. The \$4.7 billion corporate handout was an epic failure. Companies took the money and invested it in the Maritimes and south of the border. The Premier forgot to tell Albertans that his promise to create jobs was for everywhere but Alberta. We lost 50,000 jobs before the pandemic. Today 200,000 people are looking for work in this province. His policies have done nothing to revitalize Calgary's hollowed-out downtown. He lost out on a major tech company that chose Halifax over Calgary as Calgary was once this country's economic engine.

It gets worse, too. When small businesses went to this government looking for support during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCP refused to pick up the phone. They promised meagre grant programs that have been delayed and delayed. Now we risk one-third of small businesses forever shutting their doors.

The Premier has a new jobs now plan that he's touting as the Holy Grail to our economic woes, but it won't even replace half the jobs he lost before COVID-19. It won't put back even 10 per cent of Albertans who need a job now. Let's call this Premier's economic plan what it is, a joke. Except Albertans aren't laughing, Mr. Speaker. This Premier sold them a bunch of empty promises and platitudes. They deserve so much better, and they know it. That's why I'm proud to work with each and every one of them to build Alberta's future. I invite every Albertan to head to [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca) and get involved.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Member for Cardston-Siksika is next.

#### COVID-19 Vaccine Procurement and Distribution

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently we've seen Albertans step up and do their part by being safe, physically distancing, and getting their vaccines to combat COVID-19. Many of my constituents have taken advantage of any possible opportunity to get their vaccine, even if it means getting it across the border. Recently Albertans saw a tremendous humanitarian effort from the Blackfoot Confederacy in Montana, who shared their extra doses of Pfizer and Moderna with residents in southern Alberta at the U.S.-Canadian border in Carway.

This should be a welcome piece of information to Canada's federal government. Not only are people lining up safely in their own vehicles to get vaccinated; they're also saving Canadian tax dollars by us not having to buy those vaccines. I have heard from many of my constituents and Albertans across the province feeling

angry and frustrated that the federal government shut down the U.S.-Canadian border program, where Canadians were getting vaccinated.

Vaccines are a vital part of our logical relaunch plan, Mr. Speaker. The federal government shutdown of this border program is complete nonsense. The federal government's plan to procure enough vaccines to distribute to Canadians has proven to be a failure right out of the gate as other countries surpassed Canada on getting and distributing vaccines, and as Canada lacked vaccines, it made perfect sense to take up the offer from the United States for their surplus of vaccines.

Alberta's government understands that it takes a unified effort to get people vaccinated as fast as possible. That is why Alberta's government has worked with Montana to ensure that truck drivers crossing the border are able to get their COVID vaccines at a rest stop near Conrad in Montana.

I and many other Albertans are frustrated that Ottawa is unwilling to facilitate the goodwill initiative by our neighbours to the south. I ask that Ottawa think hard about Canada's vaccine rollout failure and they either set up their own vaccination distribution programs quickly or let Canadians get vaccinations from the United States through this amazing humanitarian effort at the border.

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

#### Provincial Reopening Plan and Economic Recovery

**Mr. Guthrie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week this UCP government introduced its staged approach to reopening, which paves the way for Alberta's best summer ever game plan. Stage 1 begins today, with full implementation expected by the beginning of July. Over the last 15 months Albertans have shown amazing resiliency. Despite barriers Albertans persevered, continued to look for innovative ways to foster their communities. Whether through volunteering, adjusting to working and teaching their kids from home, or dealing with the wonders of technology, Albertans faced this challenge head-on.

Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous optimism for the future of this great province. It is often in the toughest times that we show our true strength, and I believe that fortitude will be rewarded. Over the next two years Alberta's economy is projected to be the strongest GDP gainer in all of Canada. We are now home to over 3,000 tech companies and fast becoming the country's technology hub, not to mention that the spring is coiled for our film and tourism sectors to take off. Combine this with a steady rebound in oil and gas along with strength in forestry and agriculture, and this establishes the foundation for economic growth. Personally, I can't wait to enjoy live music and festivals again, and I know many Albertans feel the same way.

Throughout the pandemic the business of government didn't stop, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the work we accomplished, including completion of 90 per cent of our platform commitments. It doesn't end there. Next fall at the municipal election, with fair deal initiatives in hand, Albertans will chart our future course through referendum.

Once again I want to thank all Albertans for their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice. It has paid off. See you this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### LGBTQ2S-plus Pride

**Member Irwin:** Pride is about people. Pride is about community. Pride is about justice. Pride is about fighting back. Pride is and always has been a protest, and with this Premier in charge, wow, we do have

a lot to fight back against. In two short years this government has attacked gay-straight alliances, plans to ban conversion therapy, announced a curriculum void of queer and trans content, gutted crucial public services, and attacked our fundamental right to protest. But this should not be a surprise from this Premier. As a federal MP and minister he erased LGBTQ2S-plus folks from the citizenship guide. He worked to prevent same-sex marriages and consistently voted against trans rights time and time again. His record speaks for itself. We know there's much more work to do in fighting back against this regressive government.

Pride is about more than fighting back. It's about fighting for better and coming together as a community, celebrating those black trans activists who led the way, celebrating ourselves. Things have gotten better for many in our community but much work remains. We need change not just in government but in workplaces, in communities, in political parties, in our queer organizations because we know that far too many still feel unsafe in their community, in their workplaces, and even in their homes. We know that homophobia and transphobia cause too many to quit their jobs, to have to move away, to end up on our streets, and have their lives cut tragically short. We know this is experienced disproportionately for those in our community who are indigenous or racialized. This means that we need to commit to the work to be actively antiracist, to change our colonial structures, to ensure that we build a society that works for and includes everyone.

There is no pride without all of us. Pride is a time to celebrate, to say who we are, to take up space, and to demand better. Although we can't gather and march, no matter who you are or where you are, I invite you to join me in celebrating pride this year. And for those of you who might be struggling with your identity, your mental health, I see you. You belong here. You are loved.

Happy pride, everyone.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

### Kidney Dialysis Service in Lloydminster

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to see the government continue to take the health concerns of my riding and specifically those in Lloydminster seriously. Earlier this year we brought forward Bill 46, which solved many of the medical information communication issues in Lloyd, and now last month we received a \$4.25 million investment in renal dialysis expansion and relocation. Right now the renal dialysis unit in the Lloydminster hospital has five chairs that provide kidney dialysis to 20 hemodialysis patients, six from Alberta and 14 from Saskatchewan.

**1:40**

In order to provide more treatment, the dialysis unit will be moved out of the Lloydminster hospital to a medical space at the Prairie North Plaza on the Saskatchewan side of the city. AHS will operate the six-chair unit in collaboration with Saskatchewan Health Authority, with more room between dialysis chairs to improve patient safety, reduce concerns around infection control, and improve both the patient experience and working conditions for staff. The dialysis clinic will be able to serve 24 patients at the highest need for dialysis close to home. Space for an additional three dialysis chairs will also be shelled in for future capacity needs. This will be a huge improvement in the quality of medical services provided to residents of Lloydminster.

There was a lot of work put in to make this project happen. I'd like to thank Malcolm Radke with the Lloydminster Health Foundation, Paul Richer with the biprovincial health council as well

as Mayor Aalbers and his council. All these folks chipped in to advocate for this investment and make it a reality. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Health for his continued work and support of my riding. These things do not go unnoticed or unappreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### National AccessAbility Week

**Ms Renaud:** This beautiful old building wasn't exactly built with us in mind. I doubt they envisioned the need for virtual voting in this Chamber in order to help prevent the spread of a deadly virus. I doubt the architects of this place envisioned the need for change rooms for babies so MLAs could do their jobs. They most certainly didn't build this place thinking that every Albertan should have equal access to this space should they be elected. Look around the Chamber. It wasn't built to house Albertans who are not ambulatory. Like many institutions and buildings the Alberta Legislature is not accessible to all, which is something we should all be concerned about as this is the people's House.

AccessAbility isn't simply about installing ramps or Braille near elevator buttons; AccessAbility is about removing barriers so that all of us, in our case so that all Albertans, may participate in every aspect of society and economy. It means access to education without barriers, no matter if you live on-reserve or off, in a Métis settlement, a tiny village, or the largest city. It means equal access to health care where and when you need it. It means getting the assistance you need when you need it so that you can thrive no matter what it looks like. It means being included in decisions that impact your life before they're made.

For two years I've watched this government say the right words, wear ribbons and T-shirts claiming they're allies, but the proverbial rubber never seems to hit the road. I implore this government to stop listening to just themselves. You don't have all the answers, and you are failing disabled Albertans miserably. Listen to disabled Albertans. They do have answers. As the saying goes: Nothing about Us without Us.

May 30 to June 5 is National AccessAbility Week. The theme is Disability Inclusion 2021: Leaving No One Behind. Too many disabled Albertans have been left behind, and we are weaker as a province and country for it. We can change that. We have to change that. We will change that.

### Support for Businesses Affected by COVID-19

**Mr. Turton:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the past 14 months have been difficult for business owners across Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, and I have listened and responded to literally thousands of e-mails and calls from business owners about the difficulties they have had because of the pandemic and the public health measures. I've been truly devastated to hear their personal stories, and I thank every constituent that has taken the time to reach out to me.

I have advocated strongly within the government to support their interests, and our government has acted accordingly with the best supports for businesses in the country. Hundreds of businesses across Spruce Grove and Stony Plain have received a small and medium enterprise relaunch grant to help them weather the pandemic, and the deadline to receive the third round of this grant has been extended to June 30. Now, I realize that there are some gaps with this support, but I am working hard to ensure that businesses outside the criteria have their voices heard.

Since the beginning of the pandemic we have also provided additional supports to businesses such as corporate income tax collection deferrals, education property tax deferrals and freezes,

WCB payment deferrals, and paying 50 per cent of WCB payments for small and medium-sized businesses.

Most importantly, we have refused to bow down to those who wanted lockdowns. If the opposition was in power, we would have seen small businesses shut down for most of the last year, as we have seen in many other jurisdictions across North America. We did not cave to the pressure from the opposition and others who demanded that we close all nonessential businesses and only allow big box stores to operate. We recognize the need to balance lives and livelihoods.

In doing so, we have had the least stringent public health measures in Canada outside the Atlantic bubble while still ensuring that our health system was strong and supported. I am happy to say that the worst is behind us, and with our ambitious and rational open to summer plan I know that there are bright days ahead.

Thank you.

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

### COVID-19 Response and Provincial Reopening Plan

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday Canada Strong and Free Network hosted a virtual meeting titled Getting to a Fear Free Covid Recovery. Truth is an antidote to fear. The more of it, the better.

Great leaders do not plant fear in the hearts of others. They speak the truth in love, inspiring the best in those they serve. Displacing fear with love allows for a true recovery, deep healing from the inside out. I am blessed as a father of two young adult sons and a teenaged daughter. Parents are concerned for their children. How do we recover in our families? Loving and healing our children.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be a public inquiry, a comprehensive, full-cost analysis of COVID restrictions on Albertans. Government control and coercion, prescription and restriction produce fear and contention. Principled approaches, trusting adults to govern themselves in respectful ways, produce individual hope and societal peace.

The decision to move to a full reopening is great news. Most Albertans recognize that this is the right way and support the decision. This news alone is inspiring hope and excitement in the hearts of Albertans. That should tell us something, that Albertans are happier when they are free. They want governments to leave them alone.

If the NDP leader and others wish to continue with restrictions, that should be respected, but let's not impose those preferences on others. Let's also respect the freedom of Albertans to choose for themselves. Let's honour others' respectful choices.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-East is next.

### COVID-19 Response and Economic Recovery

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has done extraordinary work in combating the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Rigorous testing, fast and expanded vaccination, and robust government actions in tandem with the co-operation of the great citizens of this province are leading Alberta to the forefront in the mitigation of this pandemic. I would like to thank all Albertans, health care workers, business owners, and essential workers for all their hard work throughout the pandemic.

Today we have started to ease health restrictions in accordance with our open for summer plan as we continue to implement the bold and ambitious Alberta recovery plan. This plan would facilitate reinvigorating our economy and recapture and create

thousands of jobs. At the same time, we will be able to meet and gather with our relatives and friends as we enjoy our summer. The provincial government has been working day and night to help Albertans get back to work, be able to reopen their businesses, and support their family. Just recently the government launched the jobs now program, which will reduce the cost of hiring and training Albertans for new jobs. We also supported Albertans through the crisis with programs such as the emergency isolation fund, the ability to defer mortgage payments, banning rent evictions, ensuring that no one is cut off from key utilities such as electricity, business relaunch grants, and much more.

Our government has already taken action to minimize the economic impact of this pandemic and will continue to protect Albertans and their livelihoods. As this pandemic begins to fade, our government will keep on fighting by your side and get our province stronger and all Albertans back to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it's an honour to table the committee's annual report covering its activities for the year 2020. The report fulfills the requirements of Standing Order 55 and also section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. The report will also be made available on the Assembly website. I'm glad to be able to report that while 2020 was a very tumultuous year in the financial markets, the fund actually managed quite well. When markets tumbled about 30 per cent, the fund only declined by about half that and basically has regained most of it since that time. The market value at the end of the year was about \$18.3 billion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### COVID-19 First-wave Response Review

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been 15 months and three waves. More than 220,000 Albertans have contracted COVID-19, and we've lost 2,227 lives. We've seen devastating outbreaks in long-term care homes, schools, and meat-packing plants. Today we're moving to stage 1 of reopening for the fourth time, yet this Premier still hasn't released the independent third-party report on lessons learned from the first wave. It's time for the Premier to stop hiding the report and start being accountable. To the Premier: where is it?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the KPMG report was submitted earlier this year as commissioned. It's regarding our response to the first wave of the pandemic. I'm reviewing the report in light of how much our response has evolved since that first wave. In the meantime, literally yesterday I released a report on the continuing care system that incorporates lessons from the pandemic, starting with the elimination of ward rooms. The NDP can keep on playing political games over what report we released on what day. We're going to keep applying lessons that we've learned in the most concrete way and lead Albertans out of the pandemic.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, when you promise the release of a report in a certain season and can't even keep that, that's a political failure, not a political game.

Now, yesterday the Premier implied that public servants lied to him about the province's failure to hire enough contact tracers in the second wave. That also sounds like something worth looking into if you ask me. This review was meant to help the government better respond to future waves, but instead of coming out last fall, instead of coming out early spring, it's completely missed the second and third waves. Why is the Premier hiding this important information from Albertans? What is he scared of?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, nothing is being hidden; it is going to be released. Look, again they're trying to fearmonger about contact tracing. The Negative Downer Party over there are, again, not telling the truth about contact tracing. Let's remember all the times that they have been not telling the truth throughout this pandemic. The purpose has been to fearmonger – to fearmonger about what's happening, to fearmonger about what has happened or what's going to happen – and now they're so desperate, they're fearmongering about the past, about five months ago, continuing to act that way because they are so desperate. We are continuing to show that we are leaders in contact tracing. That's the . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** If reading public documents into the record to contradict the misinformation provided by members of that cabinet to this House and, through here, Albertans is playing games or fearmongering, I would like the minister to understand that that's what being in opposition is about. It's about time this Premier, this minister, this cabinet start listening to Albertans. They are tired of getting the wrong information over and over again. Where is the report?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, again, literally yesterday, not more than 24 hours ago, we released a report on the continuing care system, which includes lessons learned from the pandemic. The NDP are going to continue to play games. They're going to continue to not tell the truth about contact tracing, about what reports are being released on which day. The report is going to be released. It's going to be able to provide that context as well as for us to be able to give that context and how much the response has evolved since that first wave in 2020.

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

#### Care Facilities and Seniors' Home Care

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of the different report that the minister is trying to deflect to, he's right. There was a 200-page report released that is, if nothing, contradictory. On one hand it says that seniors need more hours of care and more staff, 6,000 more in fact, a good thing, but on the other hand it recommends paying for that by pressuring seniors to stay at home, pay more out of pocket, and rely on family for care. Will the Premier commit that he will not finance Alberta's growing seniors' care needs by forcing seniors and their families to pay more out of pocket?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, home care is publicly funded. Home-care programs are publicly funded as well as the public funding that we provide to our long-term care and designated supportive living facilities throughout the province. The NDP are now trying to attack home care. Well, I knocked on doors to be able to promote home

care and promote the ability for people to get the care that they want where they want it. We're going to continue to provide more robust home care to Albertans in their homes. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Notley:** Well, we support publicly paid home care, too, Mr. Speaker, but the minister's report talks about private pay options. Read it.

Now, this minister flatlined the budget for continuing care, but the report shows demand rising 62 per cent by 2030. The minister's directives to AHS call for major cuts to staffing and further privatization, following the Ernst & Young report, but this report says that outbreaks were worse in private care and that we need thousands more staff. The Premier has to pick: will he protect seniors and increase staff, or will he cut and privatize? Which is it?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, it's not privatizing if it's publicly funded. What the NDP are rallying against is when services are provided by independent providers. That's what's offensive to them. Can you imagine how embarrassed she is as an NDP Premier for four years who never once took a contracted-out job in health care and made it a unionized job? She totally failed the unions through her four years as an NDP, labour-representing Premier, and now it's manifesting this way.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I can take any lessons on letting down the working people of Alberta. This minister has written the book on that one; let me tell you.

Now, yesterday the Premier claimed that he was somehow supporting seniors by passing legislation to prevent families from seeking justice in the courts when they were treated negligently. He's protecting these big care companies, their poor insurance brokers because in his mind they're "very likely to go bankrupt." But last year an unprecedented number of Albertans died in outbreaks in these facilities, and their stock dividends went up. Albertans aren't fooled. Why is the Premier picking lobbyists and shareholders over seniors in care?

**Mr. Shandro:** Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. This legislation is being proposed by my hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Through Bill 70 what he's proposing that this House do is to be able to change the threshold for claims that are being made against these operators, which, by the way, is also being done by many other provinces, including B.C., Ontario. Ontario actually extinguished lawsuits. All that's being proposed in Bill 70 is that the pleadings by one law firm representing these claimants would have to be able to change their pleadings. I'm sure that could be done by that one law firm without huge burden to them.

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

#### Kananaskis Country Park Fees

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, today is June 1, and the divided Conservatives have once again found another way to nickel and dime Albertans. They hiked income tax, car insurance, electricity bills, property tax, vehicle registration, and now there's even a hike on a hike. It now costs Albertans \$15 per day or 90 bucks a year to take a walk through Kananaskis. This is an absolute betrayal of the legacy of Peter Lougheed, who never imagined charging Albertans to experience the wonders of their own backyard. Why is the Premier fleecing Albertans by turning K Country into Pay Country?



**Mr. McIver:** Well, first of all, I'd like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on that nice piece of poetry at the end of that question.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that Kananaskis Country is a gem. Many more Albertans enjoy it on an average day than Banff, and what we've heard from them – and, in fact, we can find quotes from NDPs from the past that say: why don't you invest in that park, and why don't you keep it open? So that's exactly what we're doing. We're keeping the park open. We're making investments to improve it. We believe that that's what Albertans want, to conserve it.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier tried to claim that they were charging Albertans because they were the only ones who were going to invest in the park, but let's look at the record: the PCs in 2014, \$65 million for parks; the NDP in 2018, \$89 million – that is more, for those following at home – the UCP in 2021, \$81 million. That's less, but it also includes the revenue from charging people to take a walk. Instead of taking it out of Albertans' wallets, why doesn't the Premier put his money where his mouth is and restore the funding he cut from parks? Why do Albertans always have to pay more?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is what Albertans want us to do. They've told us that they want us to preserve Kananaskis and other provincial parks for them, for their children, and for their grandchildren. That's exactly what we are going to do. The money collected at Kananaskis, which is less than the money that it costs to go to Banff, just for the record, will go to improving the provincial park to make sure it's there for Albertans' kids and grandkids. We believe that's consistent with what Albertans want us to do, and we're doing it.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is trying to claim that the only way to invest in parks is to charge people more. Here is the history. We invested \$239 million into parks, including campground improvements and trail upgrades; no fee. We funded a brand new emergency service centre for fire and EMS in K Country; no fee. We boosted long weekend enforcement with more than 300 new officers; no fee. Why do big corporations in Alberta get \$4.7 billion for nothing, but regular Albertans have to pay more to pitch a tent? Whose side is this Premier on?

2:00

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, it's a little bit rich coming from the NDP, that basically tried to lock Albertans to a large degree out of the backcountry. They made moves to make the backcountry inaccessible. We, on the other hand, know that that backcountry belongs to Albertans. Albertans know it belongs to Albertans. We are going to provide access while improving the infrastructure there. We believe that's in the best interest of this generation and generations to come. Conservation is important. Good-quality facilities for Albertans are important.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question.

### Black History Content in Educational Curriculum

**Ms Hoffman:** The UCP's curriculum has been widely condemned by Albertans of all backgrounds. Teachers, parents, school districts, First Nations and Métis groups, the francophone community have all called for it to be scrapped. But for the family of Agnes Leffler

Perry Chaney, who are watching the Premier's response today, the failures of the curriculum are deeply personal. To the Premier: please tell this family directly why the government failed to consult them before using Agnes' name to defend its horribly botched curriculum.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ms Leffler Perry is not only a notable historic figure in Alberta; she is a dedicated community member as well as a prominent pioneer in the black community. The decision to include her story and her contributions in the curriculum is meant to increase her legacy, to really be an inspiration to students, and that's why she was included in the curriculum.

**Ms Hoffman:** The minister isn't even getting her name right. Ms Leffler Perry Chaney's granddaughter Julianne says that Agnes was a private person. She was a schoolteacher who would not have approved of this UCP's draft curriculum. Julianne got what she calls a disgustingly condescending response when she e-mailed the minister. Again to the Premier: why did the government fail to listen to Julianne and her family, even when they contacted the minister's office directly and asked that Agnes' name be removed from your horrible curriculum?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were happy and are still happy to include her story. It's a story that Ms Perry herself wrote and has been publicly and widely available in the book *The Window of Our Memories*. *The Window of Our Memories* is widely available, including in our very own Legislature Library. It's also in the Edmonton library and the Calgary public library. Additionally, the book was featured in an exhibit at the Royal Alberta Museum, March 23, 2019, to November 1, 2020.

**Ms Hoffman:** Julianne stood with us today and said, quote: "Finding a name on a website and then essentially saying, 'There; we added black people' is the definition of tokenism. It's definitely not the way to increase representation, nor to address any aspect of systemic racism. Consider this my consultation. I am her only living descendant. You do not have my consent to use her name. End of story." Will the Premier and the Education minister respect this family's wishes and remove all references to Agnes in its discriminatory curriculum? Yes or no?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, this is the first curriculum in Alberta history to specifically teach black history and the important contributions of black Americans. They will learn about the black settlers who founded the Albertan communities of Amber Valley, Wildwood, Breton, and Campsie. I find it extremely rich that the word "black" is not even mentioned a single time in the NDP 450-page draft curriculum. We've corrected that. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

### Child and Youth Well-being Review

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID brought challenges to Alberta's families in more ways than anyone could foresee, and the effects on their children are challenging to measure. Last week the Minister of Children's Services and my colleague the Member for Calgary-South East announced that they would co-chair the Child and Youth Well-being Review to explore how Alberta's

government might help children address the issues created by the pandemic. To the Minister of Children's Services: can you please tell Albertans what aspects of kids' health the panel will focus on and how we can ensure that all Albertans will be included in the process?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you to the member for that very important question. We know that the pandemic has deeply affected all of our lives, and as a mom of four I can tell you first-hand that this includes the lives of our children. Preliminary research has shown increased anxiety, mental health concerns, and young kids not meeting developmental milestones. The expert panel will work to understand the full scope of the psychological, social, educational, and physical impacts resulting from and related to the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth. They will do this by learning from researchers, educators, health care professionals, civil society organizations that work with . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the challenges that kids have been facing, including restrictions, school closures, cancelling of organized sports, and continued uncertainty, that have come up in my constituency, and given that the research for the Hospital for Sick Children shows that 70 per cent of school-aged children and 66 per cent of preschool-aged children reported an impact on mental health during the pandemic and further given that Children First Canada's #codePINK campaign says that COVID-19 has led to significant impacts on the physical and mental health of our kids, can the minister tell us what children's mental health experts will be a part of this panel?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the focus of the Child and Youth Well-being Review is to understand the psychological, social, and educational impacts of the pandemic on Alberta's children and youth. Every member brings extensive experience and expertise related to children's health and mental health, including Dr. Kelly Schwartz, who is an associate professor at the Werklund School and the applied child psychology program at the University of Calgary. He says, "I'm very pleased to be part of this opportunity to learn more about how our children are processing their experiences of [the] COVID-19 [pandemic]."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the minister. Given that the pandemic has also exposed educational gaps in Alberta's schools such as literacy and accessibility and given that these gaps can be widened in rural areas such as mine due to reduced Internet access and limited resources and given that many families may not have the financial means to seek outside supports to address these issues, can the minister please tell us if this expert panel will look into specific ways that regional issues such as these can be addressed?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, the panel's first job will be to hear from as many Albertans as possible, including a wide variety of educational stakeholders, parents, and youth. We will be taking a regional approach by including MLAs in the process. They will be hosting town halls in their constituencies to make sure all Albertans get a chance to provide information and feedback that will help our panellists. As we've mentioned before, this is a crossministerial effort.

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

### Rural Care Facilities and Physician Supply

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Less than 24 hours after the Minister of Health claimed to have a transformative report on continuing care in Alberta, the lives of many rural families were transformed for the worse because today the Galahad care centre is closing, and all of its residents are being moved to other communities. For many this means separation from spouses and families. The reason for this closure is that the minister couldn't keep the facility staffed. Why has this minister failed to protect the quality of life for these rural Alberta seniors in Galahad?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have many different ways in which facilities are audited and monitored by AHS and other organizations, continuing to make sure the residents get the most important quality of care that they deserve where they live. Of course, this report is recommending numerous things such as being able to keep loved ones living together, which is going to be a monumental change for our system. Also, how do we continue to use the ASLI program, which was cancelled by the NDP, but we are bringing it back, to be able to invest in more of these facilities and more of our spaces in rural Alberta so that people can age closer to where they live?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Given that it seems the minister is unaware of the impacts of his own decisions and given that the minister's continuing care report says that it's an immediate initiative to provide direction to support couples and companions to remain living together in facilities if they choose but that just yesterday I spoke with a family whose parents are now being separated as their mother is moved today from Galahad to Hardisty, increasing the usual 15-minute trip for him to see her to nearly an hour, what concrete steps has the minister taken to follow through on his commitment and get the staff needed for Galahad and end this couple's separation?

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, when I announced the report that the hon. member even mentioned himself, by July 1 our expectations are for all the operators of all 354 of our facilities throughout this province to be able to make sure that – first, we are going to expect that the ward rooms throughout the province are going to be no more but also that people will be able to live and age together as couples or other loved ones in the same place. That's our expectation going forward. That was one of the recommendations that we are accepting and proceeding with immediately.

2:10

**Mr. Shepherd:** A recommendation, Mr. Speaker, on which the minister has failed.

Given that many other communities have seen service cuts due to this minister's failure to staff their hospitals, including Westlock, Fairview, St. Paul, and Rocky Mountain House, and given that these are the consequences of the UCP's war on Alberta doctors in the midst of a pandemic which is hitting its 15th month today, when will this minister start doing his job for rural Alberta and get back to the table with doctors? How many more communities have to suffer before he does so?

**Mr. Shandro:** None of that is true, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that, yes, COVID has had an impact on our pool of our locum providers throughout the province. That has made it a little bit difficult for us to sometimes be able to find those locums that are

needed. Sometimes the locums that are needed throughout the province increase in the spring and summer months. COVID has had an impact on that. We're going to continue to make sure that we are going to continue to support rural health professionals, including our physicians, including the \$90 million that we are spending to recruit and retain rural physicians in this province.

### Canada Pension Plan

**Ms Phillips:** Albertans do not want the government to mess with their money by gambling with the only retirement savings that many people have, which is their CPP. We know this through polling and from tens of thousands of messages that we've received from Albertans, so I know that the government has heard it, too. Will the Minister of Finance commit, then, that he will not move forward with the UCP's expensive, risky, and unpopular plan to remove Alberta from the CPP and reject the temptation to take a dangerous gamble with our money?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member is aware that our government has committed that Albertans will have their say before any changes the nature of which the member is describing take place. That's a promise we have made. It's a promise we intend to keep.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that Albertans do not want the UCP gambling with their retirement and given that it's fine for the government to spend their own political capital on an issue that Albertans strongly oppose, Albertans don't want millions of their own tax dollars spent on a government propaganda campaign to justify a UCP gamble with our retirement. How much, Mr. Speaker, of the people's money does the Minister of Finance plan to spend to antagonize Albertans on a topic that they do not support?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we consulted Albertans through the Fair Deal Panel over a considerable period of time. That panel, after hearing from Albertans, recommended that we take a look to see what this would be like. I guess it's a little unbelievable that the NDP wouldn't even want to attempt to investigate what that option might want to look like. They are prepared to make decisions without facts. On this side of the House we actually prefer to make fact-based decisions. I would hope that the NDP at some point would want to join us in knowing what Albertans think that way.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, given that here are some facts, Mr. Speaker, given that over the past calendar year the Canada pension plan returned 12.1 per cent – outstanding – and the UCP's AIMCo returned a miserable 2.5 per cent, given that these losses are in addition to the billions in liabilities that Albertans will have to assume onto our books, which is according to the Minister of Finance's own department, will the minister table the report on CPP that I know that he has – and he's had it since April – so that Albertans can see the extent to which he's putting his thumb on the scale just to make a propaganda case to gamble with our CPP retirement savings?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess what we just heard was a pretty good example of propaganda. The hon. member seems to be making all kinds of assumptions that the hon. member can't support. Albertans will have their say. Albertans, before any change is made, will see the facts that are for and against. I'm sure that the hon. member and those on that side will weigh in. We will weigh

in on making sure that Albertans have the information so that they can make an informed decision, as they should be able to make on their pension dollars.

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

### Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having a strong health care system is one of our key components of a good quality of life. Over the past year Albertans have become increasingly aware of the capacity of our health care system and the importance of ensuring that it isn't overwhelmed. As the focus shifts from pandemic to the long-term needs of our health care system, we need to zero in on improving access to physician services in rural communities. To the Minister of Health: what is being done to incentivize physician recruitment and retention in rural Alberta?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said to Edmonton-City Centre's question, we are spending \$90 million in '21-22 to address rural physician recruitment and retention. Government has also recently announced \$6 million of investment over three years to help students pay for the cost of medical school. In exchange, students will complete residency training in rural Alberta and agree to practise in a rural community when their schooling is complete. We're going to continue to fund and approve initiatives to support rural Alberta. I know Bernard and Dr. Parker are probably watching, so in case they are, just to give a shout-out to RPAP, we will continue to invest in the rural health professions action plan.

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

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, and thank you for the answer. Given that Alberta's government is creating a committee to help the University of Alberta establish a family medicine residency site in Fort McMurray and given that the committee will be led by members of the U of A's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, community physicians, representatives from AHS, and a couple MLAs, to the Minister of Health: what kind of role will the committee play in establishing a family medicine residency site in the Fort McMurray region?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can just tell how excited the member is, and she should be, and proud to be included in this. Soon more physicians will have that opportunity to complete their medical training in Fort McMurray through a family medicine residency site. One of the committee's first actions will be talking with residents of Fort McMurray and other interest groups about opportunities, issues, possible support for the site. The goal of the program is for medical students and family medicine residents to complete their training in the local hospital in the community. I want to thank the member as well as our colleague the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for their participation, and I look forward to this committee's work.

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

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It is exciting. Given that rural physician recruitment and retention is so critical in improving patient outcomes and our health in our rural regions and given that physicians who train in rural Alberta are more likely to

stay in rural Alberta and given that having a successful family medicine residency site in Fort McMurray will attract physicians to our region and improve health care, to the Minister of Health: will you please tell us when we can expect to see the family medicine residency site operational in Fort McMurray?

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

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is going to be an incremental process. It's designed to evolve and to grow the educational opportunities in the community over the next few years. Evidence shows that positive learning experiences in rural health care settings lead to more physicians choosing to pursue their careers in rural practice, so government is proud to support this committee as it looks to setting up a family medicine residency site in the Fort McMurray area. A successful site will play an important role in attracting physicians to the region and to give local residents more access to the health care that they need.

### Economic Recovery and Child Care

**Ms Pancholi:** Mr. Speaker, when the government finally announced the Alberta jobs program, child care operators were hoping this program would help them hire back needed early childhood educators laid off in the past year because that's what the program is supposed to do, put Albertans back to work. Instead, child care operators are being told they're ineligible for the Alberta jobs now program. These operators are eager to rehire. If the UCP really does want working parents to go back to work, they're going to need child care spaces, and those spaces need staff. To the minister of labour: why are you getting in the way of putting early childhood educators and working parents back to work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the hon. member that nothing could be further from the truth. The Minister of Children's Services has made it clear in this House that we have a plan that provides parents with a choice in how their children are looked after when they go back into the workforce. It's one that I would say is more universal than the trial program that the NDP had that only benefited a very small percentage of Albertans. We want to give all parents this necessary support to get back in the workplace.

**Ms Pancholi:** Well, given that the minister appears to be completely unaware that child care operators have been deemed ineligible for the Alberta jobs now program – I will table documents to that effect – and given that child care operators have been critical to supporting Alberta working parents throughout the pandemic despite the lack of supports from the UCP and given that the Alberta jobs now program would accelerate the hiring of early childhood educators and ensure that working parents have access to the child care they need to go to work and given that approximately 3,000 early childhood educators have lost their jobs since the beginning of the pandemic, to the minister of labour: why isn't it a priority for the UCP to get these Albertans back to work? Why are working women again being ignored by this government?

2:20

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would want the hon. member and, just as importantly, all Albertans to know that getting Albertans back to work is a very high priority for our government. While we have a lot of work to do, we are making progress. A report

that came out this morning from *The Owl*, from the Alberta Treasury Branches said, "Seasonally adjusted number of active businesses in Alberta rose for the ninth month in a row." We're far from being done. We're way behind from where we want to be, but we're making progress.

**Ms Pancholi:** Given that it's clear that child care operators and working women are not even on this government's radar, based on that response from the minister, and given that thousands of women working in child care were laid off in this critical sector and these women, working mothers and the women who own and run child care programs, continue to be ignored by the UCP and given that the child care sector was also ineligible for the small and medium enterprise relaunch grant and given that child care operators are describing the process of dealing with this government as constantly having doors slammed shut in their faces, will the minister of labour admit that the UCP does not understand that child care is essential to economic recovery and that our economy will suffer if child care educators, operators, and parents can't get back to work?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, really? The folks over there seem to not be aware of what they have been saying publicly for the last few months. They're saying: shut it down, lock it up, keep the businesses closed. You know who loses the most jobs? Women. Women are disproportionately employed in the hospitality industry and many other industries that the NDP would have shut down. We are doing our best, this government, to open up and get people back to work. The NDP have said: shut it down, shut it down, shut it down. This government wants to let Albertans get back to work because that is what Albertans want.

### School Construction Capital Plan and Edmonton

**Mr. Dang:** Mr. Speaker, Dr. Anne Andersen high school is opening in my riding of Edmonton-South. It's the first new high school the district has seen in over a decade, and it was a needed addition to the community. Our NDP government was proud to fund this school. Currently there are 14 high schools in the district, many of which have already over 2,000 students enrolled. With the lack of employed teachers these schools can have upwards of 30 students in each class, making it extremely difficult for the overworked teachers to provide them with the best education possible. To the minister: given what I've just described, why was Edmonton completely neglected in this year's school capital plan, especially when it comes to much-needed high schools?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the House and all Albertans that we have actually announced 14 new school projects right across the province. Of course, every school division in this province puts forward their capital plan every year. They have their first, second, third choice, sometimes even more so. I also want to remind the member opposite that we added \$90 million, the highest number ever, in modular programs, and I anticipate that Edmonton will benefit greatly from that program.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister didn't address new schools in Edmonton at all in her reply, showing that perhaps she needs a geography lesson, and given that this government has made the situation in already packed classrooms even worse by cutting funding to education during a global pandemic and given that this public health crisis proved that crowded classrooms are not sustainable over the long term and

given that students and parents I've talked to have said that even when the pandemic is over, they want more space in classrooms – that's going to require more teachers and more staff – to the minister: how many schools will Edmonton get in next year's capital plan? This year's was a dud. Can we at least give families some hope for next year?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the hon. member that there are some high schools bundled, expected to be completed by 2024. I don't know exactly when they start. Blackfalds high school in Wolf Creek division, the southeast high school in Edmonton for the Edmonton school division, the new senior high school in the Heritage town centre in Edmonton – that was Edmonton – for the Edmonton Catholic separate school division. While the hon. member says that there are no Edmonton schools in the program, the hon. member probably needs to read the budget.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's clear that this minister has not read the new school list – those are old projects – and given that school capacity needs in south Edmonton don't go away with the opening of these new schools and given that the minister continues to ignore these problems, which leads me to believe that this cabinet is the problem, and given that there is a UCP MLA and cabinet minister to the west of me, in the riding of Edmonton-South West, who should theoretically also be concerned about the lack of school construction to address future growth, will the Minister of Justice join me in pressuring the Minister of Infrastructure and the entire cabinet, for that matter, to actually green-light further school construction in Edmonton-South?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was proud to announce schools right across this province. I also want to inform the MLA opposite that, in fact, schools received more funding than they actually had students last year. Edmonton public schools had 2,000 fewer students last year. They've benefited from \$16 million of COVID mitigation funding. They were able to increase their operating reserves to \$44 million, with \$36 million in capital reserves. I just want to reiterate that the decisions that school boards are making on hiring staff are totally theirs.

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

### Rural Internet and Utilities

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I spoke with several different gas co-ops and pipeline companies and even Ste. Anne natural gas, and they have an idea that could help us with the rural Internet issue. Simply by allowing the gas co-ops to use or grant access to communication companies to install cable on their rights-of-way, this has the potential to mitigate numerous costs and schedule constraints. For ministerial review it would require only a regulation change. To the Minister of Service Alberta: is the government assessing this option or similar options to facilitate the rapid deployment of Internet to rural Albertans?

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

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. Yeah. It's true that these types of

regulatory changes may be effective in supporting broadband construction projects that will help to get connectivity out to rural and remote portions of our province. These kinds of projects could have a very important role to play. As we continue to work on our broadband strategy for Alberta, we are considering all possibilities to address this situation, including regulatory options that may be at our disposal. It's key that we focus on these as well as many other initiatives.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that there's been an increased need for high-speed Internet as many Albertans have transitioned to working from home and learning from home and given that connectivity requirements for school, business, and daily life will be increasing, not decreasing, and given that rural Albertans will struggle to participate in an evolving workforce because of slower Internet speeds, to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that rural Albertans can get the high-speed Internet needed to be competitive in the modern workforce?

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

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, just, you know, to the member's earlier comments, one tool that can help us in supporting the broadband expansion would be through the work that these natural gas co-ops are exploring. We know that they have played a vital grassroots role in delivering essential services to rural Alberta communities for many, many years, and we know that they are interested in now tackling the connectivity challenges to these rural and remote communities. Service Alberta continues to engage with gas co-ops as we work on developing our broadband strategy and as we explore this together with them as well as working with Internet service providers and telecommunications companies.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that our platform was focused on jobs and the economy and given that infrastructure projects such as the one proposed by Ste. Anne natural gas would create vital jobs and given that in the current economic conditions to access capital is difficult for some of these companies, to the Minister of Ag and Forestry: is the government considering modernizing either acts or regulations that would allow gas co-ops to be viewed similarly to irrigation districts to accelerate and access capital to accelerate these projects?

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

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that Alberta's priority is to provide safe, efficient, and affordable rural utilities because we know that's going to help to create jobs and support economic growth and recovery in our rural communities. We continue to work directly with the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops to make sure that the rural gas program meets the needs of rural gas co-ops and consumers. We are also working with them as we look at potential multiyear grant agreements, which would provide more predictable funding. Of course, we're also working with them to look for ways to cut unnecessary red tape so that we can help them to reach their fullest potential and to best serve the needs of Albertans.

### Support for LGBTQ2S-plus Youth

**Member Irwin:** It's Pride Month, and I reflect that it is about two years ago to the day that the UCP introduced Bill 8. This bill made

it so that young people would have less access to gay-straight alliances and marked the first time in Canadian history that LGBTQ2S-plus rights were rolled back. We warned this government that kids would be less safe. They said that we were spreading fear. Since then I've heard from young people and from teachers who've experienced challenges forming GSAs, and now they're even facing a curriculum that seeks to erase their very identities. To the Minister of Education: what do I say to these people who've reached out to me? It didn't need to be this way.

2:30

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our schools are all dedicated to ensuring that all children have a safe and welcoming school environment. Children will be taught in the new curriculum that all people should be treated with dignity and respect. That is essential. That is nonnegotiable. In kindergarten students begin to learn about the diversity of family structures by studying their community, the family tree and how they can differ, and how families differ from one area to another. In grade 3 students will actually learn specifically that family structures can vary – this includes extended family – and may consist of a single parent, a mother and a father, two fathers . . .

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

**Member Irwin:** Given that – Minister, those are platitudes. We know – the research is clear; the evidence is clear – that students need to see LGBTQ2S-plus perspectives named and written into curriculum. They need to be able to see themselves. Minister, I'm calling on you to be direct, talk about LGBTQ2S-plus perspectives. It matters. Now is your opportunity to make those changes to these draft curriculum documents.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the curriculum we are including many, many references to antibullying – for any reason it is unacceptable – and of course this does include sexual orientation. In the draft curriculum – and I remind the member opposite that this is a draft curriculum – we are inviting all Albertans to provide their perspectives. We invite everyone from the LGBTQ community to provide their perspectives on this curriculum. We want to hear from them, and I invite them to submit their submissions.

**Member Irwin:** Given that as many as 30 per cent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ2S-plus, often fleeing violent and unsafe home situations, and COVID, we know, has exacerbated many of the challenges they face, and given that I think about these young people not just during Pride Month but every day, it's troubling to me that at a time when this government should be investing in harm reduction, in mental health supports, and in housing, they're choosing instead to cut. To the Minister of Community and Social Services. We know that without direct funding many queer and trans youth are at even greater risk. What is this government doing to support this marginalized community? Please be specific: no platitudes, real supports.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. I can tell you that within the Ministry of

Community and Social Services when we fund homeless shelters, it is meant to be in such a way that it's inclusive for all, including LGBTQ2S-plus youth. We know that they are disproportionately impacted and are more likely to experience homelessness, so that funding is there. It's with all the seven cities as well. I know that the ministry has also provided emergency COVID funding to Pride Edmonton and other organizations within the province to make sure that youth are supported.

### Indigenous Content in Educational Curriculum

**Member Loyola:** Mr. Speaker, there's no doubting the horrors that occurred within the residential schools. At least 821 kids died in Alberta residential schools, most likely more. Those that survived were left with deep emotional scars, parents forced to endure the trauma of having their kids ripped right from their arms. We cannot hide this history from our children today. By putting residential schools in the new curriculum, we can honour the trauma faced by indigenous peoples by making sure that Albertans don't forget and that it never happens again. Will the Minister of Education ensure that residential schools are taught at every grade level in Alberta, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the very, very, very good question. I, like every Albertan, like every Canadian, was just extremely, extremely horrified. As a mother of seven, a grandmother of seven I can't imagine someone coming and taking my children and then having them disappear and then possibly even ending up in a grave such as this, an unmarked grave. It's just so horrific. I just really – my heart goes out to everyone. I just want to ensure that we never ever forget this tragedy.

**Member Loyola:** I respect the answer, but you did not answer the question that I had for you.

Given that yesterday in the House the UCP members acknowledged the impacts residential schools had on families and survivors and seemed to express a desire to work in partnership with indigenous communities and families to address these wrongs and given that the new curriculum will teach kids about major European wars and conquerors in elementary school and given that the history and the lives of indigenous people and residential schools are more meaningful and appropriate for our curriculum, to the minister. Explain why this government won't commit to putting residential school content in every grade level. Will you give meaning to the words that you and your colleagues spoke yesterday?

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you for the question. It is a terrible tragedy, and it can never be forgotten. It can never be forgotten. We have to ensure that all of our children learn about this terrible tragedy. Currently in the curriculum residential schools are taught in grade 10. We are actually including it in elementary school, so, yes, we will be teaching our children about residential schools in elementary school.

**Member Loyola:** Given that the Minister of Education said that her new curriculum will be the most comprehensive in Canada in terms of reconciliation and given that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action include developing learning resources on indigenous peoples for every grade and establishing senior-level positions in government to develop aboriginal content in education, can the minister or any minister stand today and commit to uphold all of the TRC calls to action?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committing to ensuring that our students have the knowledge about residential schools but also the heart to understand what actually transpired in these very dark, deplorable situations that they found themselves in. With the new draft curriculum every child will learn that disease, malnutrition, lack of medical care, and neglect of children contributed to thousands of children's deaths. Parents who resisted turning over their children faced fines, imprisonment, or threats of permanent loss of their children. Students were forced to abandon . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

#### Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans who own and run small and medium-sized enterprises have faced a challenging 15 months due to the global pandemic and this government's delicate balancing of lives and livelihoods. From capacity limits to social distancing guidance and various public health measures enacted to limit the spread of the virus throughout Alberta's communities, businesses have had to be resilient, fast acting, and frugal. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: can you please share with us how affected Alberta businesses will continue to be supported by this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Alberta's government has provided more than \$1 billion in support to small businesses, including through our small and medium enterprise relaunch grant. We've received more than 100,000 applications for the relaunch grant. In the third round of funding Alberta's government has already paid out more than \$40 million to businesses that have applied. The program is still open. So to businesses out there that need it, haven't got in on it yet, my advice is to get online today. Get your application in because some help is available.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the truly exciting plans for summer reopening and given that some small businesses will have to recruit, train, and even retrain some employees, to the minister: how will Alberta's government support small-business relaunch and the re-engagement of an idle workforce consistently and effectively during this vital recovery period?

**Ms Pancholi:** Include child care providers.

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is great support for child care through the Minister of Children's Services. Restaurants and hospitality have been amongst the largest recipients of funding under the relaunch grant, and they can still apply for up to \$10,000. But the best thing we can do for restaurants, unlike the NDP, is let them open. Today restaurant patios will open with four people per table. As long as hospitalizations stay below 500, on June 10 we'll see restaurants be able to open with six per table, indoors or outdoors. Because Albertans are getting vaccinated faster than ever

and doing their part to stop the spike, we're able to let these businesses open.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Very exciting times for Albertans and all Alberta businesses and families.

Given that many hospitality industry operators suffered significant revenue loss during the pandemic and given that food delivery services emerged as the go-to for takeout meals to consumers, providing some modest revenue and cash-flow opportunities to many restaurants, to the minister: does Alberta's government have a plan to place caps on food delivery service fees in support of sectoral recovery?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, that would be a failed NDP policy if we were to do that. We're still providing the relaunch grant to small businesses affected by public health orders. We've extended our pause on collecting the tourism levy. We've talked to those people that deliver for restaurants, and most of the big companies have given reductions in their cost. But the answer: to do that, as the NDP wants, would put more of these people out of business that are making their deliveries. They're making their living making these deliveries to people. Actually putting one business out to save another is not a net gain. That's why we're not doing the NDP policy.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. [interjections] Order.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South has risen. Presumably, it's on a point of clarification or something.

**Mr. Dang:** A request.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I'd like to address an issue prior to receiving that request.

#### Speaker's Ruling Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

**The Speaker:** Earlier during question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud or someone on her behalf – either way would be inappropriate – tweeted from inside the Chamber. This is a very clear breach of the rules. Not only did she tweet from the Chamber, but she also indicated the presence or absence of a member, both of which would be inappropriate. I'd ask her to apologize and withdraw.

**Ms Pancholi:** I apologize and withdraw.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe – never mind.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the stories of Agnes Leffler Perry Chaney, a notable historical figure in Alberta and a pioneer in the black community, who is mentioned in our draft K to 6 curriculum. Ms Perry herself wrote her story in an excerpt of the book entitled

*The Window of Our Memories*, which can be accessed in numerous Alberta libraries, including our Legislature Library.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the Minister of Transportation.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of items to table today, the first being documents, information on the six credit downgrades that the UCP government has been in receipt of. I have one from December 4, 2019, which was a double downgrade from Moody's on high environmental risk due to climate change. I have March 19, 2020, from DBRS Morningstar. I have June 30, 2020, the Fitch downgrade, and I also have the October 9 credit opinion from Moody's Investors Service, also a downgrade, in 2020.

In addition, I have a few items of correspondence, Mr. Speaker, that I have received from constituents. They are all concerned about the future of parks, protected areas, and conservation policy in Alberta. I have a requisite number of copies from a Ben Livingstone, who is very, very concerned about the future of parks. I have correspondence from a Mark Riphagen, who writes that the park system is vital to the future of Alberta. I have correspondence from Moira Young, similarly concerned about parks and protected areas policy. I have Ted Nanninga, the same. I have a note here from Krysty Thomas, who is also very, very concerned about parks, protected areas policy, and policies in Kananaskis.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. I referenced a document in question period today, Mr. Speaker. I'll table five copies of *The Owl*, which says that the seasonally adjusted number of active businesses in Alberta rose for nine months in a row.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Nicolaidis, Minister of Advanced Education, pursuant to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board annual report 2019-2020 and the report titled the same for 2020-21.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Ordres du jour.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good afternoon, hon. members. I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 65 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 65, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. Now, I had had a conversation prior, in second reading, going back and forth with the minister in regard to some of the questions about the outstanding judicial process that existed around

some of the mental health amendment act. Now, we've seen under this piece of legislation that the mental health amendment act is actually being reopened again because some pieces needed to be changed according to the government.

While we were discussing that piece, we noticed that there was a portion of the bill that could have been amended under the mental health amendment act that wasn't addressed in this bill. So I had hoped that at some point when we were going back and forth and having the discussion around the amendments that we would eventually hear back from the government as to why the recommendations that were made from the judicial review were not included in the amendments to the mental health amendment act.

Now, some of you may remember – because I did kind of go on about this for a little bit of a period of time – that there was a review that was done to ensure that when people are being supported through the Mental Health Act that their rights are ultimately being protected. It led to a court challenge that did end up having some very clear recommendations that were provided to the government that I think would have been appropriate to have put in this bill to address those concerns. That was something that we had discussed when we were looking at second reading and asking the government to take some more time and to send this back to committee to be reviewed and then eventually to wait for six months so that the appropriate changes could be made.

Now, I haven't seen or heard any indication from the government that there is a willingness to look at making those changes around the Mental Health Act. I guess I'm just curious as to why, even though it was brought up and the attentions were made to those concerns, the government wouldn't want to even just do the amendment, like, bring their own amendment in today under Committee of the Whole to look at making those changes around the Mental Health Act. Again, you know, we've heard this government stand up repeatedly, talking about how they value mental health and how they want to make sure that individuals are supported and that they have access and that ultimately their rights are protected, yet at a time where they could have addressed the changes, it didn't happen.

2:50

So again I would like to give an opportunity to the government while we're looking at Bill 65 to look at the fatality inquiry that happened, look at the information that was provided, and amend this piece of legislation with the judicial recommendations in mind. If the government doesn't want to make the amendments, the least they could do would be to provide that information and make it public so that members of this Chamber understand what the recommendations were. We can have a wholesome debate around why the government doesn't feel that it's appropriate at this time to make those amendments. You know, it could just be that if those amendments were made, it may impact other pieces of legislation that at this time can't be addressed because it would be something that needed to be reviewed. Fair enough.

But we haven't heard a response from the government as to why they would ignore a fatality inquiry and why they would ignore the recommendations around the fatality inquiry. I think that's pretty serious. I mean, we're talking about mental health. We're talking about what could have potentially prevented a fatality, yet we've heard no dialogue, no response, and no real willingness from this government to make those changes. Again, you know, if we could, I would like to hear from the minister as to why those changes weren't made and if there could be a conversation or some information shared with the opposition as to why we wouldn't be aligning the changes within the Mental Health Act with the fatality inquiry.

I think I'll leave it there for now because I would like to encourage the government to stand up and maybe respond. Then, if not, I'll be more than happy to stand up again.



**The Chair:** Are there any members wishing to join debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 65? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 65, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, in Committee of the Whole. You know, just reviewing this and listening to the comments of all members of the House, I appreciate those comments.

I, too, like many other members on this side of the House, have some concerns specifically to the fact that, you know, in a time when we should be doing everything we can to, first, be creating jobs for Albertans and diversifying our economy and, second, be ensuring that we are protecting the many physicians and doctors across this province who are working night and day to support Albertans through this pandemic – and the same goes for all health care workers. Of course, at the beginning of this pandemic we saw this government firing 11,000 health care workers or planning to at the end of the pandemic. They had originally had that plan and put it on pause for now but have made no guarantee that that won't continue to be the case after we make it through this public health emergency.

Now, the fact is that while we have the opportunity through this piece of legislation, Bill 65, to strengthen some of the things that we see specifically around the ability of the minister to levy fines against insurance companies when they're not filing their reports on time in this instance – unfortunately, while we have that opportunity to strengthen this legislation potentially around that fact, we've seen quite the opposite here in Bill 65. Again we're seeing a piece of omnibus health care legislation before the House. And instead of strengthening these provisions to hold insurance companies accountable – of course, as we read through this legislation and understand how it's reflected in the Health ministry, these costs are a cost on our health care system. We should be doing everything we can to create transparency, to create greater oversight, but again we're seeing the opposite.

We've seen previously to this piece of legislation, of course, in our term in government, that we took the opportunity, seeing that Albertans were struggling to pay for increasing insurance costs, to cap those increases at 5 per cent. Unfortunately, when this government came into power, as I'm sure you know, Madam Chair, we saw this government not renew that 5 per cent cap on insurance. What we've seen since then is upwards of 30 per cent increases for many Alberta families and in some instances even higher rates of increases on automobile insurance for residents of Alberta.

You know, when we also consider – maybe not directly related to what we're talking about here, but we have seen a need for greater oversight on the insurance industry and on insurance companies. You may remember, Madam Chair – and I'm happy to table it at my next opportunity – that back on September 29, 2020, we saw 16 insurance companies being fined more than \$1.5 million for overcharging Alberta motorists. Again, any opportunity that we have to strengthen this process, to ensure there's greater oversight, to hold companies accountable.

We know that overall we are proud, and we understand the situation that our insurance companies are in right now. We also understand that they are businesses above all else that, in many instances, have to do what they can to get the greatest return for the shareholders, but at the end of the day, we as legislators and MLAs should be doing everything in our power to strengthen that process and strengthen the oversight.

So when we see what's in this bill, the opportunity that the minister is proposing to give himself to be able to waive late filing penalties for auto insurers, we continue to ask why this has been

included. We have gotten very little if any answers from this minister on why they're moving forward on this. When we reflect on the failure to continue that 5 per cent cap from this UCP government, when we look at the changes that this government has made around minor injury regulations to actually take money out of the pockets of Albertans who may be suffering from a life-altering brain injury, unfortunately, Madam Chair, it does not seem like this UCP government or this minister has the best interests of Albertans at heart.

On that, I'm going to be putting forward an amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I will just give you one moment to receive your copy, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. member, note that you're moving on behalf of another member.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, this amendment as proposed by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre states that Bill 65, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, be amended by striking out section 2(3). This is specific to the issues that I just brought up around the ability of this minister, if passed as proposed by the government, to give themselves further discretionary powers to choose whether to assess a fine on automobile insurers when they don't file on time.

Of course, I also discussed the fact that we have this under a health bill because the cost to Albertans and to the Treasury Board and Finance is incurred through this process and often is relayed back to the Minister of Health to fully understand their budget through that process. Again, we're asking that this section as proposed by the minister be completely removed from this legislation. We do not believe in the opposition caucus that this is strengthening the process of holding these companies accountable. The minister has shown time and time again that he is more concerned about the wishes of the insurance industry and these companies more so than the wishes of Albertans, who are trying to, well, at the end of the day be able to afford these costs but in this instance hold these companies accountable through the process.

We are asking that all members of the Assembly support this amendment as it's been proposed. We see that this government is sneaking in another favour for the automobile insurance industry at a time when we should be doing everything we can to support Albertans through that process, especially when it comes to transparency. This amendment would strip this bad provision out of this bill.

We'll have more opportunities to talk about the other things that we're seeing in this bill as we already have through the Committee of the Whole process, which I look forward to. With that, I think I will take my seat and we'll have the opportunity to hear from some other members about how they're feeling about this and maybe even from the minister responsible for this legislation about why they thought that this was a good part of the legislation in the first place, because I'm not so convinced, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Member, can I just seek clarity if you or someone from your team will e-mail the table a copy of this amendment?

**Mr. Carson:** Yes. I'm sure we can venture to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. It's a new thing for us all, so thank you very much.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

3:00

**Ms Sweet:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and, yeah, I'm sure we'll figure out the e-mail. I didn't know about the e-mail process.

Okay. So amendment A1. Basically, I mean, I think the concerns here around, again, looking at people who have been in car accidents and the concerns around what that long-term effect will be on an individual are part of the reason why we wanted to bring this forward. We know there have been significant changes to the insurance industry, well, since the government came in, whether that's around removing caps, whether that is around trying to adjust what kind of things will be covered. I think that, you know, we have to be really careful when it comes to insurance and how we're supporting individuals when they're accessing it.

I think, you know, people pay into their insurance premiums and into their policies for the reassurance that they will have the protection when they need it. To see some changes happening here under Bill 65 I think raises, again, some questions around: who is this government really trying to protect? Ultimately, when people purchase into a premium, they should know that they're going to have that protection, but now we're seeing that they may not. There are many questions around this because what happens is that now we're seeing that auto insurance can be connected to a health bill. It could potentially look at knowing how much to levy onto a company.

We would need to make sure that companies are disclosing that information, that they are making sure that everyone is aware, that Treasury Board and Finance is aware of the different payouts that may be coming through insurance, because, ultimately, when we start seeing caps being removed, when we start seeing people having to pay higher premiums, the question then becomes: how much of what people are paying is in relation and equivalent to what kind of services are being paid out? Of course, there should be some form of balance.

We want to make sure that, again, we're not seeing a government who has decided to start making changes through this Red Tape Reduction ministry, which – you know, I'm starting to have some concerns about the number of changes that we're seeing through the red tape reduction strategy and, really, how it's not actually helping Albertans, but in fact I see that it's actually creating more costs for Albertans through many of the different changes that we've seen in many different pieces of legislation. This example for this amendment, actually, would speak to the fact that we're now seeing the automobile industry being provided another loophole, where, if they don't provide information to Treasury Board and Finance, well, maybe it's not such a big deal. The changes in here are going to say: well, you know, we'll let it go this time, even though up until today and up until this bill would or may pass, there would be some accountability there.

Again, we're seeing the government proposing to give the Finance minister the power of discretion. We're seeing a lot, through these red tape reduction bills, of power of discretion. We were talking about this last night around the other red tape reduction bill, which speaks to the cabinet having discretion around approval rights when it comes to utility corridors. My question to this is always: why is the government continuously giving more and more and more discretion to the minister? Why is there not a trust in the process? Why are discretionary measures constantly being made around regulations through orders in council? What is this government actually trying to hide from Albertans when a minister always gets to have discretionary decision-making powers?

We know that the government is hoping that an order in council – you know, there aren't very many people who read the orders in council every week and go, "Oh, my goodness, the government just

changed this," that that's what they want to happen. Through this change an order in council can be made. The minister can use his discretion and just kind of wave the magic wand and say: "Well, solution fixed. I now have the authority to exempt you from having any accountability. You don't have to report back to me. It's all good. Oh, by the way, if you want to increase insurance costs to Albertans, don't worry. Go ahead even though you haven't proven that that actually makes sense and that any of the documentation or fiscal responsibility that you have to report back to Treasury Board and Finance has been done. Oh, well, no big deal. Just keep going on your merry little way, friends, because that's what it's about, right? Who's your friend? Who's not your friend? Well, if you're my friend, I'll just wave my magic wand. If you're not my friend, you pay more." It's definitely – and these bills continuously seem to favour friends and punish Albertans.

I think, you know, that from a transparency perspective, from a valuing of Albertans' money, their personal money, from an accountability perspective, from making sure that Albertans feel like they have a trusted relationship with their insurance provider, this government would just look at this amendment and go: "You know what? We should listen to Albertans. We should protect Albertans and not worry about what our friends are telling us in our backroom and make sure that there is accountability here and that the minister doesn't have this ability to just magically wave the magic wand."

With that, Madam Chair, I would urge the government to accept this amendment to choose Albertans over their friends and to hold themselves to a higher accountability.

**The Chair:** Any other members that are wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to join this debate. Pardon me. I'm just trying to take off one of my masks. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment, which shouldn't surprise anyone in the Chamber, but this amendment is – I mean, I think we should really call this the accountability amendment or the accountability clause because at the moment, the way this House statutes bill reads, it's giving the Minister of Finance incredible powers to make decisions, quite frankly, that are questionable as far as exempting how much – sorry. Let me just back up here.

We want to know how much money it should be, as far as fines go, if the insurance industry doesn't submit their paperwork on time, which in and of itself seems quite logical. It's the same process as for Canadians that have to file their taxes by a certain date. If you don't file by a certain date and you owe money, there are penalties. Why are there penalties? To ensure that there is some kind of incentivization for people to do it. In this case, these insurance companies now can file late. If there was going to be a fee or a penalty applied to them, the Minister of Finance, behind closed doors, can unilaterally make decisions for them not to be fined. Now, I don't know, off the top, how much these fines could be, but I'd imagine that they're no small sum. The challenge, Madam Chair, with the fact that one minister has the authority and ability to waive that, could very easily put them into a conflict of interest.

For me, my understanding of orders in council, having sat at that table, is that decisions are made by cabinet and not by an individual member. The reason for that, Madam Chair, or one of the reasons, is for oversight and to ensure that there isn't a potential conflict. I mean, I don't know, again, the size of these fines, but the fact that you have companies that only need to get one person's permission to remove the fines is problematic. We don't know the

conversations that these companies are having or potentially could have with the minister.

Now, I have no reason to believe that the Finance minister isn't a person of integrity, and I'm not questioning his integrity. What I am questioning is putting a person, a minister, an individual in a position that his or her integrity could be questioned or the optics of his or her integrity could be questioned. My hope, Madam Chair, is that Albertans will have access to the information as far as which companies haven't filed on time. Again, let's back up and review the fact that this is about submitting paperwork on time. This is about filing. This is about accountability and transparency, and companies have responsibilities.

3:10

Now, I've heard from the other side that have talked about: well, sometimes there's an extraneous circumstance. Okay; fair enough. I get that. If they're in the middle of a natural disaster or something that prohibits them from filing on time, could they get an extension? Could they file late? I think that under certain circumstances that sounds reasonable to me. But to make changes to legislation which allows them to not just file late, whenever they choose – it no longer has to be around extraneous circumstances – now there are no consequences. So what happens if there are companies who file and miss the filing deadline year after year? Well, there's no consequence. They just have to pick up the phone and have a conversation and plead their case and, hopefully, convince the minister to not apply these fines. I mean, if we're going down this path, why doesn't the government, then, just remove the fines? Why don't you just remove the fact that they have to file to begin with?

I see I've gotten the attention of the associate minister of red tape. Hey, I mean, this is it. This is up your alley. Isn't filing red tape according to this government's own definitions? Sorry, Madam Chair. Through you to the hon. minister, I would love to ask him if this fits with his definition of red tape, because I've heard the minister speak in this Chamber, and they've talked about reports as red tape. They've talked about groups or agencies or companies that have received government funding having to fill out paperwork as red tape. I know that because they've talked about that as it applied to the investor tax credit. It's, like: you're right; we should just allow any company to issue tax credits, essentially spending tax dollars – Albertans' dollars – at whim without having any oversight. That sounds a little preposterous, doesn't it, Madam Chair? Well, I think so, too.

At least with this amendment, as it is applied to this part of the Health Statutes Amendment Act – you know, Madam Chair, this is interesting in and of itself. Can somebody on the other side please tell me what auto insurance has to do with the health statutes? I don't see that at all. Now, either the government is being lazy, lazy because they don't want to introduce another piece of legislation, or the fact is that this doesn't fit with a different omnibus bill. The fact of the matter is that this is a health statutes bill.

Now, it raises a lot of eyebrows and questions for Albertans. Maybe part of the reason it snuck in on this bill is because the government wants to pass this as quickly as possible and didn't want to introduce another bill, which begs the question: how many companies are asking for this change? I'd love to get access to those conversations. Who's asking for this change? How often is it going to be applied? How much are they saving? How much money should the government on behalf of Albertans collect? My understanding, without this amendment, Madam Chair, is that companies would have the ability to apply for an exemption for fines under special circumstances. That existed before this amendment to the bill, via the health statutes, was introduced into this Chamber. I think that these are really good questions.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that Albertans have questions and are scratching their heads, wondering why this change is being made and also raising flags around the fact that you've now removed a layer of accountability, a layer of oversight by ensuring at least the rest of cabinet has to agree to this exemption before it can be granted. That's why so many decisions are left to order in council and not just to an individual minister. It's not just about preserving the integrity of that minister; it's also about ensuring that this system continues to have integrity. If all of these decisions are left to individual ministers, with no oversight, then that's when people begin to lose faith in the system. Are we rewarding just our friends? Are we giving them special exemptions? Are we giving them special treatment versus others?

What happens to tenants and renters when they pay their monthly rent late and if they do that over and over and over again? There are consequences. What happens when our kids hand in school assignments late? The odd time can they get an extension? Sure, if they ask in advance and it's reasonable, but if it becomes a pattern and a habit, then it affects the credibility and integrity of the system. At that point, then, why should others file their paperwork on time? Again, is this clause, is this amendment going to reward bad behaviour? If other companies look to see one of their competitors getting away without filing or filing late with no penalties and no consequences: hey, why should we file on time?

I hope the government appreciates that what this amendment does – this isn't even removing the ability for the government to waive late fees. This is just ensuring that that decision isn't made by one individual member of cabinet, that one minister doesn't have that kind of authority, again, because we don't want Albertans to question the integrity of that individual. If I was the Minister of Finance, I don't know if I would want that authority. So I'm asking members of this Chamber to accept this amendment, which, again to clarify, only requires that any exemption on paying late penalties, which still exists in this legislation, has to be done through an order in council. It cannot be done by a single minister. It needs cabinet. That's oversight and accountability.

I think what's frustrating Albertans is that at every turn, time and time again they are seeing examples where this government pays lip service to accountability and transparency and does the opposite. Actions speak louder than words. Colleagues of mine have asked really good questions as far as: what is behind this change? Who's asking for it? How does this change help our system, help strengthen the system, help strengthen accountability and transparency? I'm failing to see that at the moment, Madam Chair. I'm hoping that others of government may respond to this. Again, this amendment simply changes how that exemption is granted. It does not remove the ability for government to grant exemptions.

3:20

As I've said right from the beginning, there may be times when exemptions are warranted and justifiable. It doesn't have to be always or never, but there surely should be accountability and oversight. If this government chooses to vote against this amendment, then it's very, very clear where they stand on being accountable to Albertans, on being transparent, and I think Albertans may call their integrity into question. If they want to do their Finance minister, current and future, a favour, I hope they look long and hard at this amendment and choose to accept it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak to the amendment regarding Bill 65, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. I think, like the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview indicated, that this is absolutely not a health statutes amendment. It is misleading simply in the title. I don't know why this government chose to do this, but then when we look a little bit deeper and we see what they're actually asking to do, it's quite concerning. We have a government that is asking to take the ability to give the power to the minister to choose whether to assess a fine on automobile insurance when they don't file in time.

I think that this amendment is pretty straightforward. It's saying that the minister should not have that power to do it. It's something that as opposition members we question, and I know that Albertans question when this government continues to give this incredible amount of power to the ministers in their cabinet. I know that this government has a really unfortunate history when it comes to supporting Albertans' health and supporting them with their insurance companies.

If we talk about some of the things that this government has already done to date, when it comes to, specifically, individuals that are working with insurance companies, we've watched this government put forward legislation – and it went through – that said that concussions are not a serious injury. They're taking the rights out of Albertans that are claiming these insurance claims and reducing their ability to access what they deserve, what they need. The simple fact that they reduced a brain injury to a nonserious injury is mind-blowing to me, but that's what this government is doing with insurance companies. That's an attack on Albertans that deserve to have insurance claims brought forward and properly compensated.

The other piece that this government has done when it comes to insurance companies and health: they limited the number of doctors that could appear on a file in support of the patient or the claimant. That's a huge concern when it comes to people that are dealing with injuries that are making a claim against these insurance companies. I can't imagine that when they did the consultation, they actually spoke to Albertans that are being impacted by these claims.

We have this government asking to make power to the minister to make decisions about insurance companies and their fines. We've seen what they do to the Albertans that actually access insurance. They've said that if you have a concussion, which is a brain injury, which has been very well researched and supported all across Canada, that's not a serious injury. They've taken away the ability to have multiple doctors on a file. After an accident you may require your family physician, you might have a neurologist, you might have a back specialist, you might have a brain specialist, but you have to choose which one is more important for your claim. Absolutely not acceptable, but this government did it.

When we look at what it would take to assess whether or not they've filed in time and what the reasons are, how is this government, the minister responsible equipped to do that? What sort of evidence or information is the insurance company required to provide to get away with not paying a fine? There's no information about what sort of evidence is going to be required, what the criteria are. Is there a consideration about, perhaps, how many times this insurance company has been late to file? Is there a consideration about how many times they've been fined for other things?

When it comes to supporting Albertans, this legislation does not do that. This supports insurance companies. This tells insurance companies: don't worry; we've got you. When you're in an accident, there's a time period where you have to file to have your claim heard. Is there going to be some leniency given to people that

are in an accident that were unable to file in the time period allotted? I think it's two years. Is that going to go to the minister to see if they're now able to make a file against an insurance company? I certainly don't anticipate that from this government. They're looking at ways that they can continue to support these companies that are not putting the best interests of Albertans first.

The very first thing that we saw that was an indication to Albertans about their alignment with insurance companies was removing the cap. Our government introduced an insurance cap because we heard from Albertans that it was skyrocketing, that the way that the insurance rates were rising was becoming unaffordable. What did this government do? Listened to their insurance buddies that didn't want this cap. They wanted to be able to charge whatever they want without any sort of monitoring, and they removed the cap. That was the first thing that this government did that triggered: oh, something is going on with the insurance companies.

Then we watched them take away Albertans' rights when they were in an accident, not their fault. It wasn't about filing in time. It wasn't their fault. They were injured, and this government said: "No. Concussion: not an important injury. Too many doctors: you only get one."

When we look at another thing that this government is doing to support insurance companies, it's not surprising that they're coming forward with something that goes straight to the minister to talk about whether or not a fine should be implemented for filing late. It's, again, an abuse of power that this government is using, and it's definitely not in the best interest of Albertans.

I would suspect, Madam Chair, that if we were to talk to Albertans about what they thought the Health Statutes Amendment Act was, I would assume they're going to say something about health, something that this government is doing in the middle of a pandemic to support whatever is needed in health services. That would be hopeful. It'd also be wrong.

In this Health Statutes Amendment Act the piece that we're asking to be amended is to remove the power from the minister to pick and choose which automobile insurance gets fines if they don't file in time. I would encourage every member in the House to support our amendment, and I'm interested to hear the reasons why they shouldn't. It'd be nice to hear an argument about why government isn't supporting this. But I would like to hear an honest reason why this is put into their legislation and how they can justify that a minister should have that right, that power to do it. By not removing it, I think it speaks volumes to, again, another thing that this government has done to align themselves with insurance companies, not Albertans.

With that, Madam Chair, I will take my seat. Thank you.

3:30

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment of the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. Now, of course, as the critic for Health I had the opportunity to receive a briefing on this bill. Certainly, one of the things that stood out to me is that we had a provision here related to auto insurance and indeed the powers of the Minister of Finance in the midst of a Health bill. Certainly, myself and the staff that were attending and supporting me in that briefing had some questions for the staff of the ministry as to why this provision was being included in this bill.

Now, my understanding is, of course, that we are taxing auto insurers for the health care costs of motor vehicle accidents. In order

for the government to know how much tax to levy on each company, the insurers need to file their paperwork every year. That makes sense. Certainly, it would seem to me that for the government to operate efficiently, for the government to, say, reduce red tape and duplication, it would make sense that you would have a deadline in place by which that paperwork would be filed. That would allow the department then to have a fixed deadline to know when that paperwork would be received and then be able to process everything together in levying those taxes and bringing in that income on behalf of Albertans, and that is crucial because indeed we are taxing to help cover the health care costs of motor vehicle accidents.

Let's be clear. You know, obviously, automobiles are incredibly important transportation. They are an essential part. But the costs of automobile accidents are a significant one in our health care system. Indeed, we've heard about that recently as we have had doctors reporting about the incredible pressure they face due to this government's insistence on once again acting last and least on COVID-19 and allowing the third and worst wave of COVID-19 to put incredible pressure on our hospital system. Doctors were talking about how, of course, with the summer weather and the long weekend, we'd get an increase in these traumatic types of incidents like car accidents and how, unfortunately, they were under tremendous pressure to be able to care for folks that were in those accidents because of the incredible pressure that had been generated by how bad this government let the third wave get.

Recognizing that we have those costs within our health care system, it's important that we recognize that we need to have an efficient means of collecting the tax that is rightfully levied on insurance companies to help cover some of those costs. Now, what we have here in this bill, as my colleagues have noted, is giving the power to the Minister of Finance to unilaterally decide to waive the deadline, to decide to waive the penalty that they would pay. Now, that certainly is not an option that is available to the average Albertan. If they fail to pay their Alberta income tax on time, they will face a penalty. I'm not aware that they can appeal to the Minister of Finance to personally get an exemption, regardless of what their circumstance might be. I can tell you that in that briefing that I had with the department, we asked them if they could name any circumstance in which this had been necessary so far. They were not able to do so. They were able to posit a potential possible scenario but could not provide any concrete example where this was required.

Now, of course, Madam Chair, I mean, when we were talking about filing paperwork, I can understand that this government feels sympathy, perhaps, with an insurance company that is not able to file on time. After all, this is the government whose Minister of Health promised a report on their handling of COVID-19, early this year, on the first wave. Five months later, no hide or hair. It's sitting on the minister's desk, and he may deign to let Albertans take a look at it if he decides he feels like it. This is a government whose embarrassment of an inquiry into foreign-funded groups opposed to the oil sands is now on its fourth extension, \$1 million over budget and a year late.

No wonder this government sympathizes with insurance companies who aren't able to file on time. This government clearly is unable to themselves. Indeed, they took months more than any other province in Canada to roll out a critical worker benefit, barely got that one in before the budget deadline, and utterly failed to do so on their jobs now program, couldn't get it in before the end of the fiscal year, risking millions of dollars of support for Albertans. So I guess this government has sympathy with insurance companies who are unable to get their work done on time.

Of course, that's not the only way this government has in common with insurance companies. We're talking about this amendment which gives the Finance minister the ability to unilaterally decide to grant an exemption to the fines that are due for an insurance company that does not file on time. I mean, after all, this is a government, like insurance companies, that is extracting record amounts from Albertans' pockets in the midst of a pandemic. With the announcement, of course, today that under the UCP K Country has now become Pay Country, Albertans going in and wanting to camp or visit in the Kananaskis area are now paying out of pocket, much as insurance companies, which we are discussing here in this bill, and their exemption now at the will of the Finance minister from paying a fine if they choose to file late or are unable to file on time – much like those insurance companies are charging higher premiums from Albertans for a service that they've had previously and that has not changed, this government is now charging Albertans to access K Country.

Indeed, this government is charging Albertans. Every single Albertan is paying more in income tax, just as they're paying more in insurance to these companies which now have access to an exemption through the Finance minister, with no accountability or oversight, much as this government is now extracting more income tax from every single Albertan by allowing bracket creep.

This is a government, of course, that downloaded policing costs onto local municipalities, which, of course, then get dumped, downloaded onto the local taxpayer. In the same way that this government, which now wants to give itself the ability to, without any oversight, give an exemption to an insurance company that is not able to file its paperwork on time – in the same way as those insurance companies, this government is now extracting more dollars from the average Albertan's pocket to cover policing costs, not to mention the increases in the education property tax.

Again, it is no wonder that this government feels sympathy with insurance companies to the point that this government, of course, decided to remove the cap that was there on insurance rates, after which we immediately saw insurance rates go up for every single Albertan. In the midst of a pandemic, while folks in other provinces are in fact seeing rebates from insurance companies, Albertans are paying more because this government, as we see in this bill, which we are proposing this amendment to change, has more sympathy for insurance companies than it does for the people of Alberta.

They're more interested in giving a break to an insurance company, which frankly – let's think about this. This is basic paperwork. These are big insurance companies, okay? These aren't generally small mom-and-pop affairs. They have entire accounting departments. They are keeping track of their data. They have the spreadsheets. I mean, we're talking insurance companies here. These are folks who sweat the details. That is their job. That is how they make a profit.

**3:40**

All they have to do when they're filing their paperwork is the equivalent of hitting the "sum" button on their Excel file, generating that year-end total like every other business, including all of those small businesses which have been hurt so badly under this government's roller-coaster approach to the COVID-19 file while providing so little support. All of them will still be expected to file their taxes on time though I believe Revenue Canada may have offered some extension on that period, but they will still face an actual deadline. But this government isn't interested in making things easier for those folks. No, this government's priority is to make sure that the Finance minister can give a break to the large insurance companies which these folks are paying, a lot of these

mom-and-pop organizations, small businesses, family-owned, and paying higher rates, of course. Again, thank you to this government.

This amendment simply removes that, simply acknowledges that we have a working system, acknowledges that the government and the staff with whom I had the opportunity to speak as part of the briefing have not demonstrated an actual need for this change, because this government and certainly the ministers that are involved, either the Minister of Health, who's bringing this bill forward, or the Minister of Finance, who it would empower, have not stood in this House and given any explanation for who they spoke to, who came to them and said that this change needed to be made. Because they have not been able to provide any reason for this, I see no reason to give an additional power now to the Minister of Finance.

Some of my colleagues have noted that that's something that this government is very fond of doing, taking things out of orders in council, giving them directly to the ministers, taking things out of the regulations, moving them into orders in council. Now, they may argue that that is about reducing red tape; it's more efficient. Well, sometimes, Madam Chair, democracy and accountability are inefficient.

But there is a reason that checks and balances exist, and that is to protect Albertan taxpayers and, as my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview noted, to protect the integrity of the system, not impugning any minister of this government and suggesting anything about their personal integrity but recognizing that we have indeed at times had folks that have occupied ministers' offices who have had questionable integrity. It's entirely possible and indeed likely that someday we will again. The purpose of having these checks and balances, of limiting the power that ministers wield – and let's be clear that they wield an enormous amount of power already, so when there is a proposal to give them more, to remove a check and balance, there should be a clear, thoughtful, and robust explanation for why that decision is being undertaken. So far, as I noted, we have not seen or heard that on this portion of this bill.

That is why I am very happy to speak in favour of this amendment, which will simply strip that provision out of the bill. If the government is unwilling or unable to provide a defence for it, to provide an explanation for it or a concrete circumstance where it's actually been needed and not available, then frankly this is not a power the minister needs. This amendment would strike it out and give us the opportunity, then, to focus on the other parts of this bill for which the government has perhaps been able to provide a bit more justification and explanation.

But for this particular piece they have none. Indeed, it seems simply that they are once again putting their priorities ahead of the good of the people of Alberta, prioritizing large corporations before individual Albertans, small businesses that more than ever need a break from this government after what this government has forced them to endure over the last 14 months. For that reason, I will be very happy to vote in support of this amendment and encourage all colleagues in this House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Anyone wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to clarify a few things here. A few members have spoken to this issue. I have sat across from the members opposite for six years, and it is always interesting to see how many times they can come up with stories that have no basis to them. Let's just talk about, you know, why they'd like to do this amendment. The reality is that rather than saying that this is all about us giving preferential treatment to big

corporations, like they like to say all the time, instead, this is a situation where if there's a flood or a natural disaster or a fire, records are destroyed. There might be a situation where these companies cannot file on time. We need to have provisions for that. That's what good governance is.

What's interesting is that the opposition's record has been, Madam Chair, to say that they are absolutely opposed to any kind of business. They drove out billions of dollars of investment over the four years that they were given a mandate in Alberta. Because of that, it just shows the opposition's contempt towards business in any of its forms. Whether they say that they are for small businesses or not, the truth is that that is just not true, and their record shows it.

What is shown on our side, Madam Chair, is that we are actually working towards helping our job creators because we know that they do what? They create jobs. They jump-start the economy. They are the engine of our economy, not government. This is the reason why we are continuing to do work on red tape reduction in this government. We are going to reduce regulatory burden by 33 per cent. So far we're at 16 per cent. We're almost 5 per cent above where we planned to be at this time. I'd take that record over the record of the NDP any day. The reality is that when they were in government, they didn't cut any of the regulations because they thought they were all important.

Here's the problem, Madam Chair. We don't have a problem with regulation; we have a problem with overregulation. Albertans have over 670,000 of those pinch points, those hoops that they've got to jump through. We counted them. We counted all the legislation, the regulations, the forms, the policies. We counted how it disproportionately affects small businesses. If the members opposite really do care about small businesses, they would champion the work that we're doing in red tape reduction in this business, and they'd say: let's get behind that initiative because it's going to stop our small businesses from having to be able to wear all of those hats and jump through all of those hoops that they don't have compliance officers for to do it in the first place.

But, Madam Chair, we don't hear that from the members opposite. What we hear from the members opposite is continuing smear and fear. The truth is that we have not heard a credible argument about why we should be voting for this amendment. The only argument that they have is fear and smear and this idea that we're somehow helping big business. That is absolutely not true. [interjections] They continue to heckle because they don't like the truth. It's just a nonstop heckling from the members opposite. This is the problem. We sit there and listen to what they have to say. We try to be respectful. But they heckle constantly, nonstop, because they cannot stand the truth.

Madam Chair, the reality is that when it goes through an order in council, that can take up to six months of timeline in order to be able to actually get something done. They have continued to say that that is not a good practice. This is a great practice. Time is money. If they don't understand that, they've never signed the front of a cheque. That is the reality. It takes a long time to be able to get things through government. If we can stop that process from taking so long, up to six months when it goes through an order in council, that's a good thing. That's a good thing, to get out of the way of our job creators.

Madam Chair, I'm not in favour of this amendment. I would hope that all of our members in this House would vote against this amendment, knowing that it is anti-Albertan and antibusiness, and it is not going to help us get Albertans back to work.

3:50

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Well, I'm super excited to respond to some of those comments. Thank you, Madam Chair. The first piece of this that I find really interesting is that the minister just spoke up and wanted to talk about small business and how this amendment will actually not support small business and it's counter to, you know, the business structure of Alberta. Well, let's talk about that. The curiosity that I have for the hon. minister is if he understands or if the government understands the difference between the facility market and insurers. If the minister or the government understood that, they would understand that by making some of the changes that are being made right now, they actually are starting to impact the small insurance companies, so our mom-and-pop shops that are just offering some of that insurance. By making this change, it actually has the capacity to start interfering with the facility market. That's a problem for small business.

That's a problem for our small insurance companies, the ones that aren't considered the big insurers, because, of course, the issue with doing this is those small companies' every contract, every service, every process, every time limit: all of the things our small insurance companies and our big insurance companies have to do. Our small insurance companies have to, from the time that they do the application, ensure that the coverage is binding, the premiums are binding, and the considerations are binding. Because they're smaller, they have to be accountable, and they have to demonstrate that.

With this exemption what this could ultimately do is it will start to impact the insurer's ability to be involved in the facility market because there will be exemptions given to the big people, the big, big insurance companies, but our small insurer companies, our small-business owners, who are doing a significantly less amount of insurance, do not have the same capacity as the big insurance companies. In fact, by providing these exemptions, it will impact the insurers pool and then, ultimately, impact the facility market.

What does that mean? Well, that means that that could impact the ability of our insurers, our small mom-and-pop shops, the capacity to work within the small insurance company groups. It will impact their ability to be able to engage in the facility market because they're already competing with bigger markets and with bigger insurers. Now we're going to start seeing exemptions for bigger companies that may not necessarily be provided to smaller mom-and-pop shops, which then creates an issue within the market for them to be able to access. They're already competing, and now there are going to be exemptions provided that could limit the ability for these smaller companies to compete. So yes, actually, it is small business, and it does impact small business.

Also, the claims involved with insurers and underinsured motorists have to be filed within 24 hours to seek the benefits in the compensation, so the question to the minister or the government would be: could this make it harder for insurance companies to even comply with their annual reports? They already have to report within the first 24 hours if there is a file for benefit or compensation. If those 24-hour filings must be done under the act to ensure that people have access to the benefit and compensation, how, then, can they not report that on an annual basis? If the argument is that, well, this might be a one-off because there's a flood or a fire or something like that happens, I feel like many of these insurance companies are probably in the tech world now, so there's probably some capacity there, but a one-off should not influence a whole piece of legislation.

The question, again, would be: since it's already being reported within 24 hours to provide benefit or compensation, where is that reporting going? Where is that information landing? It still has to be reported. The government has information and is aware of it somewhere, so it doesn't excuse the inability to report on an annual

basis. If small companies, who are competing with bigger companies and are able to report within 24 hours, as required by law, can manage to make this work, are able to do the annual reporting system, are trying to still compete within the facility market, why is this exemption even required?

[Ms Glasgo in the chair]

Who is it benefiting? It's not benefiting our small and medium business owners, the ones that are trying to compete within the facility market, the very insurers that the minister just stood up and spoke about, saying that we don't stand up for small business in the NDP. Well, the reality of it is that this piece of legislation that we are currently trying to amend does not stand up for small and medium-sized business owners, does not stand up for small and medium-sized insurance companies and those who are just trying to be able to provide the basic insurance without having to have to go to the big banks to get the insurance.

So who does this support, this piece within the act? What does the government think it is going to benefit? I'm hearing directly from people who work in this area, who understand as a small insurer that this will have a direct impact in the insurers pool and a direct impact into the facility market. It is a problem for small and medium-sized business owners. Depending on who the stakeholders were that were spoken to, which could be big insurers, sure, big, you know – I'm not going to name anybody because I don't know. I don't know who the government spoke to. But I have a feeling that the government didn't speak to the local insurance broker down the road, because these two key issues that I just brought up would have been brought up in the conversation.

Again, Madam Chair, I would like to remind the government that when conversations are happening, they can't just be with the big players. It's time to go back to the grassroots, as the government likes to reference, talk to the people that are being impacted. Maybe the minister would like to respond to my questions about how this will protect small and medium-sized business owners in regard to being insurers and supporting them in the facility market.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comments from the member just before me, and I also thank the mover of this amendment, the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre, for his comments on this legislation as well. I think that there were some really important points that were raised within his conversation and also some very important connections, I would say, between this government's decisions that we're seeing through this bill and their failure on multiple accounts to even hold themselves accountable. Maybe there is an understanding there of why they might be loosening the rules for insurance companies across the province. I deeply appreciated those thoughts and also for bringing this amendment forward, of course. It relates back to my ministry from the aspect – well, not my critic portfolio necessarily but the idea of consumer protections and what we're doing to ensure that the systems that are put in place are working for Albertans and not just large corporations necessarily, but there should be a level playing field between everyone.

We've heard on multiple occasions this afternoon through the debate on this amendment the idea that we are looking for more than just hypothetical instances where this legislation may or may not be useful specific to the idea of loosening the requirements of filing to be happening on a timeline, on an annual basis, and also the idea that this government might even go as far as to waive the

finances that are currently in place for late filings for these insurance corporations. I appreciate the comments, again, from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre around the idea that these are highly sophisticated organizations. I mean, we are putting a lot of trust as Albertans, as ratepayers, as drivers in this instance in the ability of these corporations to be held accountable and to understand the numbers at the end of the day.

I think that the other point that was made is that these corporations and these companies are built on the idea of having these numbers in place so that they can understand their profit margin, so that they can go back to their shareholders and let them know their rate of return and return on investment year over year. The idea that we need to loosen these timelines, that we need to remove the idea of fines, potentially, at the whim of the minister flies in the face of everything that this government, I believe, was elected on. We can look back on Bill 10 and the idea that the government gave itself the ability to move forward with legislation without even coming before this House.

4:00

We saw the great outcry from Albertans when those powers were unilaterally being given to this government and their ministers, yet here we have something, I would say, in the same vein, where insurance companies, if they aren't able to file on time for whatever reason, are now able to come to the minister.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I would ask – again, we've heard this this afternoon – who is going to benefit most? Who is going to receive that phone call back from TBF staff saying, "Yeah, you're good to go"? Who are the ones that are going to be told that they're not? Is it based on who has the biggest lobbyist working for them, who has donated the most to the UCP? There are a lot of questions still on the table that have not been responded to. Again, the hypothetical instances that we heard from the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction – I would appreciate hearing from the minister responsible for some of these changes that we're seeing in Bill 65. Maybe they would have some real evidence or real opportunities that might arise. As the Member for Edmonton-City Centre laid out – and we heard, again, from the associate minister only hypotheticals. We have no real understanding of: would this have been used in the past? How much in fines would have been waived in the past if this legislation had been passed as it's proposed before the House right now? Are there instances on the horizon where this government already knows that people are going to be filing late? Is that something where this government is considering and trying to pass this legislation before the need to levy those fines?

I think that's something that we should be very concerned about, yet we haven't gotten any response from this government on those matters. Instead, we have the associate minister standing up and attacking us for what he calls our attacks on small businesses. Really, we are trying, as the UCP and the Wildrose once did, to do our best to ensure that there is a level playing field, that it's not about who has the most lobbying power, about how big or small your corporation is. At the end of the day, everyone under the law should be treated the same. Offering the ability for the minister, at his discretion, to make these changes and not hand out these fines when they potentially should have been is, in my opinion, Madam Chair, a disgrace, a disgrace to everything that this government campaigned on and once stood for.

We're seeing that in so many instances: on this legislation, in the previous Bill 10, and in many other opportunities where we've seen this government make changes that they either didn't campaign on or did not tell the full story about the changes that they were

considering. Even through the consultation process we've seen many opportunities where this government consulted on one thing or another, and when we saw the end result, it was much different than what the feedback was and, potentially, even what the consultation matters were in the first place.

It's very hard at this point to, again, understand why we need to move forward with the sections that are being proposed and that we are trying to amend without real concrete answers. We haven't gotten those from the ministers or any members of the government in this House. We did not receive any reassurances or real instances of this being necessary through the briefings that the critic responsible for this portfolio had with ministry staff. Again, it's really hard to understand how we're supposed to vote on this, how we're supposed to give the minister more power to make these changes unilaterally, without coming before the House even, to waive fees that are there for good reason and that were put in place in the first place to hold insurance companies accountable.

Again, I reflect on the fact that last year we saw 16 insurance companies fined more than \$1.5 million for overcharging Alberta motorists. I understand that in many of those instances the people who were overcharged did receive compensation back, but we didn't fully see. It wasn't revealed how much money the drivers themselves were actually being charged in the first place and if they were receiving fair and full compensation after that process. Again, everything that we do in this House should be to uphold the transparency of the system, should be to increase the accountability of the system. Everything that we're seeing, that we're trying to amend through the amendment before the House flies in the face of that, Madam Chair, so I'm very concerned.

I appreciate that we've had one associate minister stand up on this. I don't believe that our concerns were addressed. Instead, we had attacks on many other things. But the fact is that we haven't gotten concrete evidence that this is necessary or instances where the government might already be considering that this needs to happen to actually benefit all Albertans and not just large insurance corporations.

With that, hopefully, the government will support this, because their own ministers have not given proficient or fair feedback on this amendment, and I think that it's important that we all support it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to make some brief comments on this amendment to the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021. I believe that it was and is a very prudent addition to this amendment act by substituting and thereby striking out a section that many of my colleagues have already spoken on quite eloquently. I should say that I'm quite emphatic about this, too, that section 2(3) needs to not be a part of this bill.

Again, it is proposing that the Finance minister is given the power to waive penalties for auto insurance companies in terms of filing what otherwise they are legally bound to do. You know, having this discretion moved to a minister's office, I believe, is just another favour that this UCP government is casting to the auto insurance industry. I don't have to remind Albertans or people in this room or anyone, really, that auto insurance has increased dramatically in the province of Alberta over the last couple of years, since this government came to power, and at exactly or precisely the time when we've experienced an economic downturn due to COVID and energy prices and so forth.

Albertans are feeling it from many different sources, this, you know, shortage of money in the family income and losing jobs and



so forth, and it's not as though auto insurance is an option for many Albertans as well. Indeed, it is mandated by law from this very place that people must have auto insurance in the first place in order to operate their vehicle. As an extension of that, I think it's fair and logical to say that it's incumbent upon the same government that imposes that people must have auto insurance, which is, of course, a practical thing to have – right? – to have to ensure that it remains affordable. For many people, not having an automobile is not an option for their jobs, for their families, and so forth, so we have to keep the automobile insurance laws and regulations as clean and as straightforward and supporting Albertans, the consumers, at every juncture as we possibly can.

Like I said, we have pretty clear evidence that automobile insurance has gone up quite dramatically in the last couple of years at exactly the same time when people are generally driving less than they ever had been before. I know it's certainly the case in my family, you know, myself usually travelling around the province quite a lot doing my job as the Official Opposition critic for Advanced Education – right? – visiting 26 or more colleges, universities, polytechnics around the province. I mean, with COVID, we're just not driving as much.

If anything, we should have a reduction in our insurance rates because the insurance rates are based on actuarial calculations – right? – of the percentage or the odds of when someone is engaged in an accident or something happens and so forth. This is the essence of what the auto insurance industry is, that you make a calculation of how many crashes there are going to be or some, you know, problems with cars, and they set a rate that would reflect covering the costs of those crashes and with room for some profit for the company.

#### 4:10

If people are driving fewer kilometres and there are fewer cars on the road – you know, God bless the morning radio shows that have a person that does the traffic portion of the show every morning. For the last year and a half I've heard exactly the same traffic report, pretty much, which is: it's looking pretty good out there; there are not too many cars on the road. It could be Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: it's pretty much the same deal. Anecdotally and factually, we know that people are driving less. Why has this UCP government gone out of their way over the last couple of years to cut deals to allow auto insurance companies more profit, especially given the circumstance like I just described, right? It's not logical, it defies the economic reality that Albertans are facing right now, and it flies in the face of the simple fact that people are driving less during COVID.

I believe that in some small way this amendment, I guess, pushes back on that. You know, we're not saying that we oppose the whole bill categorically, either. Quite the opposite, you know. Not at all. When we have an opportunity to make an amendment – amendments keep rolling in here all the time, in fact – it's by virtue of a way to try to make legislation better, and in this case taking this bad provision out of the bill definitely makes it better. We have insurance companies that definitely, as I say, base their businesses on sophisticated actuarial calculations to price their system. Certainly, they know their capacity to submit a short report to the government of Alberta, I think, how much they've collected for premiums over the year. It seems perfectly reasonable, right?

I haven't heard anything that would describe why they wouldn't have to do so. I would not suggest anything nefarious around that, but I think we are owed an explanation to say, well, why do we want to allow the Minister of Finance to simply waive this provision for auto insurance companies to submit this information? You know, I heard some vague explanation from the opposite side that maybe if

there's a disaster and maybe the records got wet and they carry them in boxes and they could store them in the basement or something like that, but, I mean, you know, obviously that's absolute nonsense. We know that an insurance company would be probably saving their data digitally, I would imagine – right? – and keeping track of it in that way. Certainly, that's not an explanation. Kind of funny but not otherwise helpful.

You know, just like when this same UCP government removed the insurance cap and premiums went up so much – now, once burned, twice shy, Madam Chair, quite frankly. We see more latitude being brought forward by this government in the form of legislation towards auto insurance companies, and people say: "Hey. Whoa. What are you doing? What's the point? Last time you did that, I ended up with a 20 per cent increase in my insurance rates. What's this one going to cost me and my family?"

I would just very simply say, then, that I would urge all members to vote in favour of this amendment, right? It doesn't compromise your support of otherwise what you had intended to do with the Health Statutes Amendment Act, but I think it's reasonable and fair, after the arguments that we've put forward, that this House would support this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise just to respond to a couple of comments that were actually made by the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction because some of his comments were completely false, not even mildly false or a little incorrect; they were factually false. Under our term in government the NDP lowered the small-business tax rate by a third, making Alberta the second-lowest small-business tax jurisdiction in Canada. The only jurisdiction that has a lower small-business tax rate is Manitoba. I'm sure the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction knows that the socialist NDP government under Gary Doer reduced it to zero. Yes, it was done under an NDP government, not under a Conservative government. Small businesses in Manitoba don't have a small-business tax rate, which, of course, gives them, you know, a significant amount of savings until they reach the threshold where their corporate tax rate kicks in.

The issue that this side of the House had when the government launched their race-to-the-bottom corporate tax handout was that the promise of the Premier and this government was that that policy decision would create jobs and bring back economic prosperity. What the government has since learned is that many companies took those savings and invested them in other parts of Canada and in the U.S. It did not actually help the economy the way it was sold to Albertans. That's what I want to start off by saying. Oh, and the other small fact that the government loves to oversee is that in 2018 alone there was over \$13 billion of new investment into Alberta. Thirteen billion in one year. You know, Madam Chair, I'm trying to remove some of the amped-up rhetoric.

I would love to have the minister, going now to the amendment, respond to the questions that we're posing. It's around: why is this change being made? Why does the minister need to have exclusive ability to waive penalties and not cabinet? Again, that was an extra level of oversight. We're not even proposing to eliminate the ability or to stop the government from exempting companies from paying penalties. But that question hasn't been answered.

The minister likes to talk about, you know, how there are circumstances that may arise where insurance companies may not be able to file on time. Okay. We accept that. I accept that argument.

But we're not talking about: should they be allowed to file late? We're talking about: if they file late, should they have their penalties removed or waived? Okay. That I have a litter harder time accepting, but let's just continue along this path. Then if the answer is still yes, what is the process for those companies to have their fees waived? The process up until this bill was through an order in council so that an individual person is not making that decision. Quite frankly, it is a concern on the optics of one person that may be lobbied to waive a fee for a company as opposed to it being a decision made by cabinet, that there is that extra level of oversight. Now, I would have thought the associate minister of red tape would appreciate extra oversight, extra accountability.

The opposition has been asking legitimate questions about why this is being brought in and who was lobbying for this decision. I am still hoping that we'll get some answers because I think they're valid questions. You know, I think that sometimes the government needs reminding that the opposition has a role to do, a different role than government. Part of our role is not only to hold the government to account but to ask questions on behalf of Albertans that Albertans deserve to know. That's why there are 87 members elected to this Assembly and we're not a one-party state.

So I'd appreciate getting some answers from the minister on this amendment, which I think is reasonable. It's just ensuring that there is that oversight, that it's not just a minister's decision but that it remains an order in council to waive any potential late penalties.

With that, Madam Chair, I will take my seat.

4:20

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 65, in Committee of the Whole. Any members wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 65 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

**Bill 63**  
**Police (Street Checks and Carding)**  
**Amendment Act, 2021**

**The Chair:** We are on the main bill. Any members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 63. Let me say that there are doubts. On this side of the House we believe that carding should be banned, and we believe that carding has been and continues to be illegal in this province even without this legislation. That's what the government also pointed out in their release back in November 2020: carding has been and carding continues to be illegal in this province.

With respect to interactions between Albertans, the public, and law enforcement, we believe that we need to strike a balance between the need for police to be able to perform their functions

and citizens' rights to be free from any targeting based on who they are. Just to summarize our position, we support a complete ban on the practice of carding, and we believe that the government needs to strike a balance between the police need to perform its duties and citizens' rights to be free from any targeting, bias, or any kind of discrimination. We believe that this bill does not ban carding completely, and it does not strike the right balance with respect to other interactions of law enforcement and the public.

We will try to make some changes to make sure that we get this right. As I said, we want this government to get this right. We want this government to ban carding. We want this government to regulate the interactions between Albertans and law enforcement properly.

With that, I will try to move an amendment, of which I have the requisite number of copies for distribution.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be know as amendment A1.

Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Sabir:** I move that Bill 63, Police (Street Checks and Carding) Amendment Act, 2021, be amended in section 2 by striking out the proposed section 38.1(2)(c) and substituting the following:

- (c) "prohibited ground of discrimination" means
  - (i) any ground on which discrimination is prohibited under section 4 of the Alberta Human Rights Act, or
  - (ii) any ground on which discrimination will result in a breach of an individual's rights under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Madam Chair, this is a fairly straightforward amendment. Both Alberta and Canada have robust human rights frameworks enshrined in law to protect all of us, to protect all Canadians, all Albertans from discrimination. We believe that the discretionary powers of police must be subject to these standards, which they are, but for greater certainty, I believe that it's a good statement to have enshrined in this law to give assurance to all Albertans, in particular BIPOC communities, that whatever those interactions will be, those interactions will be governed by the rule of law. They will be governed by the Alberta Human Rights Act, and there won't be any kind of discrimination based on the prohibited grounds that are contained in the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As I said, that is the case anyways, but this provision, this amendment, will ensure that there is clarity on what it means to be not discriminated against on the prohibited grounds. The bill in its current form includes an officer perception of discriminatory grounds. What this amendment is doing is taking out that subjective perception of the officer and stating, in a straightforward manner, what those prohibited grounds are and where they are found in our law. This change will, I guess, make this bill a bit better.

With that, I urge all members of this House and the government side that it's a very straightforward, common-sense amendment and that they all support this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any members wishing to speak to amendment A1 to Bill 63?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:28 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Eggen	Shepherd
Carson	Goehring	Sweet
Deol	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Amery	Madu	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	McIver	Singh
Getson	Neudorf	Smith
Glasgo	Nixon, Jeremy	Stephan
Glubish	Orr	Toor
Goodridge	Pon	Turton
Gotfried	Rosin	van Dijken
Guthrie	Rowswell	Walker
Hunter	Rutherford	Williams
LaGrange	Sawhney	Wilson
Luan	Schow	Yao

Totals: For – 8 Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 63, Committee of the Whole. Any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was hoping that that was a very common-sense amendment and would go through, but it didn't.

Again, as I said, we are in favour of a complete ban on carding, and we recognize that interactions between Albertans and law enforcement need to be properly regulated. This bill doesn't accomplish any of that. This bill does not ban carding, and it doesn't strike the right balance between Albertans' right to be free from discrimination or state coercion and what police need to do their job, do investigations.

It's with that in mind that we are trying to make this bill better. We are trying to make sure that this bill does what it says that it's doing and this bill does what government claims that it's doing.

With that, I have another amendment that I would like to move, and I do have the requisite number of copies for distribution.

4:50

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A2. Please note that it is two pages.

Hon. member, please read it into the record.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-McCall to move that Bill 63, police amendment act, 2021, be amended in section 2 in the proposed section 38.1 as follows: by striking out subsection (4) and substituting the following.

- (4) A police officer may only collect, record, retain, store, use or disclose information, including personal information, under this section if the information is
  - (a) voluntarily provided by an individual after the police officer
    - (i) informs the individual that they are not required to provide the information to the police officer, and
    - (ii) informs the individual of the reason for which the police officer is requesting the information from the individual,
  - (b) obtained as a result of a non-detention, non-arrest interaction with a police officer, and
  - (c) obtained during the course of one or more of the following activities:
    - (i) gathering information for the purpose of intelligence related to individuals known or reasonably suspected to be committing an offence under an Act of the Parliament of Canada or the Legislature of Alberta;
    - (ii) inquiring into offences under an Act of the Parliament of Canada or the Legislature of Alberta that have been committed;
    - (iii) inquiring into suspicious activities that may lead to detecting an offence under an Act of the Parliament of Canada or the Legislature of Alberta;
    - (iv) another lawful law enforcement activity.

And (b) in subsection (7) by striking out “subsection (4)” and substituting “subsection (4)(c).”

I will briefly explain what this amendment is doing and what we want to achieve through these amendments. As I said – and I want to say it one more time – we support a complete ban on carding. In November, when government made the announcement, that was the impression that government gave, that was the impression that we got, that was the impression that Albertans in BIPOC communities got, that government is moving ahead to ban carding. Even in their news release they said that carding has been and carding continues to be illegal in the province of Alberta. That's a direct quote from the government release.

At that time the government gave law enforcement agencies guidelines that they should follow in coming up with regulations regulating the street checks. But when government brought forward Bill 63, despite the government's contention that Bill 63 will ban carding, in its current state it doesn't ban carding. It creates discretion and gaps which, in practice, legalize carding – they're confusing carding with street checks. I would say that it's an issue that is important to me personally, that is important to many Albertans who I represent in my constituency, and that is important to Albertans across this province, in particular black, indigenous, and persons of colour communities because oftentimes interactions with those Albertans are at issue.

What this amendment will do is that it will actually ban carding and will put an end to any discrimination of racialized Albertans. It will provide some clarity on what police can and what they can't do.

I believe that the minister will agree with me that in our legal system, when a citizen, when an Albertan, a Canadian, is stopped by police, they do not have any obligation to provide any information to the police. Let me say this again. When an Albertan is stopped by a police officer in a nondetention, nonarrest interaction, an Albertan, an individual, has no obligation to provide any information whatsoever to a police officer. But we do know that not everyone will be as familiar with their rights and obligations when stopped by the state in uniform. It's a common-sense amendment that will put an obligation on police officers to inform individuals of their right that they don't have any obligation to provide any information to police officers. All we are asking is that the law enforcement should inform individuals that their interaction with them is voluntary and that they're under no obligation to provide such information.

The second thing is that the police should also inform citizens, individuals, why they're stopping them. That happens when, for instance, a police officer stops somebody in a vehicle. The first thing they will do is that they will let them know the reason why they have been stopped. What we are saying here is that in the event of street checks, in the event police stop any Albertan, one, they should tell them that these interactions are voluntary and they have no obligation to provide that information, and second, they should tell them the reason why they are stopping them and tell them that

they are free to walk away. Only then should law enforcement be able to use that information for the activities that are listed under subsection (c).

These recommendations are not something that we invented. This is something that is in the law. That's what our legal system is based on. It's just for the benefit of those who may not always know what their rights are when stopped by the state in uniform, that they must be informed of their rights. There was a recommendation that was coming out of the Report of the Independent Street Checks Review in Ontario that was done by the Hon. Justice Michael Tulloch of the Court of Appeal. Pretty much, this amendment mirrors what is contained in that report out of Ontario where the government of Ontario had a sitting justice of the Court of Appeal, the highest court in Ontario, work with the communities for almost a year and then put together this report and recommendations. So the changes I'm suggesting are based on that report, and I hope that the Justice minister would consider these amendments thoroughly.

5:00

I think it's only fair that people who have been disproportionately subjected to carding and street checks – we owe it to all those Albertans. We owe it to people in BIPOC communities – indigenous communities, black communities, person of colour communities – that they be protected, they be informed of their rights when the state is stopping them in uniform, and they be treated with utmost fairness. I think that requiring police officers to inform them that interactions are voluntary will be a good first step to equalizing that power dynamic that exists between the state and its subjects. By making sure that the officer is required to inform the subject, to inform the citizen of the reason why they're stopping, I think that will also create a greater trust between police and Albertans and the public.

These are very common-sense amendments that are based on research, that are based on the report of Justice Michael Tulloch, and I think that if the government really wants to ban carding, make these interactions between Albertans and law enforcement better – I hope that all members of this House will support these common-sense amendments.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to amendment A2, that has been put forward by the Member for Calgary-McCall. You know, I think that the Member for Calgary-McCall and I can agree on one thing – and he made reference to that in his late submissions in support of amendment A2 – which is that we all heed to multicultural communities to make sure that we have banned carding and that carding has not been repurposed in the form of street checks. I completely agree.

But, Madam Chair, one other thing that is so frustrating when we are dealing with issues like this, especially from the members opposite, is that rather than focus on what it is that we are trying to accomplish – you know, when there is a problem, the first thing you ask yourself is: what is the particular problem and whether or not there is a root cause of that particular problem and what you must do in order to solve that particular problem. I don't think anyone in this Assembly would disagree that carding is a problem, has been a problem in our province and across the world.

The members opposite would not deny that carding was also a problem throughout the four years that they presided over our province because they wouldn't deny that particular fact, that it has been a problem. Even if they do, I will pierce that knowledge on

them, because before this Assembly, the steps of this historical Legislature, members from the minority cultural communities, like the one that I come from, like the one the Member for Calgary-McCall comes from, protested while they were in office, calling upon them to do something about it. They lifted no finger, and *Hansard* will bear witness to many of the comments made by members opposite on this particular issue. In fact, the then Minister of Justice, the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, and indeed the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, you know, concluded that they didn't think this was a problem at that point in time.

In fact, the Member for Calgary-McCall ridiculed the Member for Calgary-West because the Member for Calgary-West stood before the floor of this Assembly trying to get the members opposite to understand why we must ban carding, that it was an unconstitutional act on the part of law enforcement. It was a Conservative MLA for Calgary-West. They did nothing, and this is why – if folks back home are wondering, you know, why I will not give the NDP a pass on matters like this, this is it. This is a classical example of the members opposite. They had opportunity at the time.

At the height of the protest to ban carding, I was a lawyer sitting in my law firm not too far from here, at the centre of downtown, monitoring those protests. I, you know, communicated with the community members. I encouraged them to come to this Assembly to protest as a private lawyer, and members of those communities who were a part of the protest will confirm this. I met some of them in my law firm, and I committed to them that if I ever got the opportunity, I would.

As I began my law career in a state Attorney General's office in faraway Nigeria, where my main responsibility, my first job, was to travel all across the municipalities in that particular state in northern Nigeria, in the correctional facilities and prisons, trying to get people who had been prisoned without lawful excuse, whom the law enforcement would not allow to have their day in court, forcing the state to get them to court so that they can face justice, from municipality after municipality as a young lawyer, fighting law enforcement over their unconstitutional dealing with citizens – this was in faraway Nigeria as a young lawyer.

You know, when I came here, one of my first employments – my second employment was with Legal Aid Alberta – was because I also worked for Legal Aid Nigeria, where I also had to fight for matters of this particular nature. If there is anyone in this Assembly, with all due respect to my colleagues, very suited to tackle this particular issue, I think you have him right here. As a lawyer right here in Edmonton I have fought for, I have pursued all kinds of cases, from human rights to employment standards to labour relations to, you know, the Human Rights Commission, Court of Queen's Bench, Court of Appeal on behalf of minority fellow Albertans. I have done so. I have not just participated in the talk; I have actually walked the talk. I have actually taken steps to fight for them in the courtroom, at tribunals.

I know the impact of carding, and I committed that we would get rid of it because it is a practice that is discriminatory, that is committed against mostly cultural, indigenous, minority communities. That is what we on this side of the aisle have done. That is the bill before you, the bill that followed a historic announcement, on November 20, 2020, where we banned carding, directed law enforcement that on a go-forward basis, until we finalized that particular bill, they must not card any fellow Albertan. As the Justice minister I have been in very close contact with the chiefs of police across our province to make sure that they understand that I meant business when I said that we would not card fellow citizens.

## 5:10

Here you have the NDP, the members opposite, doing again what they are expert in doing, virtue signalling. Classical NDP tactic. Wouldn't lift their finger when they had the opportunity to do so. They would want the minority communities to believe that they are the political party and the government that will fight for them, but for four years they did nothing. Here we are with that bill that actually is more aggressive than anything we have ever seen with respect to carding in this country, and they are bringing forward amendments that really don't make sense. It's unfortunate.

If you look at the previous amendment – section 15 of the Charter. That is everyone. It doesn't belong right here because that is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Everyone in this country – it's one of the highest laws of the land. It's a constitutional provision. But the NDP once again is sinking to bring it into a bill that has covered what they are trying to accomplish.

The previous amendment and section 4 of the Alberta Human Rights Act: take a look at it. That particular section of the Human Rights Act has got nothing to do with the concerns of this particular bill. Section 4, "Discrimination re goods, services, accommodation, facilities": that is the title. That is the headline of section 4 of the Alberta Human Rights Act: "Discrimination re goods, services, accommodation, facilities." We are talking about the police practice, the unconstitutional practice of carding. The MLA for Calgary-McCall is my learned colleague, learned in the law. He cannot claim ignorance of the differences between section 4 of the Alberta Human Rights Act and Bill 63, whether or not Bill 63 covers the protected grounds under that particular legislation.

If you take a look at what the amendment sought to accomplish, it's right there. In this particular bill section 38.1(2)(c) reads:

"prohibited ground of discrimination" means a person's race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation.

Right there in Bill 63.

Amendment A2, again one of those virtue-signalling amendments, seeks to strike out subsection (4) and substitute in it what the member opposite thinks satisfies or makes the intent of our original subsection (4) or strengthens subsection (4). It doesn't. Subsection (4) reads:

A police officer may only collect, record, retain, store, use or disclose information, including personal information, voluntarily provided by a member of the public, obtained as a result of a non-detention, non-arrest interaction with a police officer, under this section if that information is obtained during the course of one or more of the following activities:

So this is where the exception is.

- (a) crime prevention activities.

I want the law enforcement of this province to be able to prevent the commission of crime. That is their number one primary responsibility. I am not going to undermine that. People from my community, from any cultural community, would not want to undermine that because they, too, want to be safe in their communities. They, too, want to be protected from the commission of crimes that oftentimes ravage minority communities more than any other community that we know. I know that from experience because, one, I come from a community that has borne the brunt of criminal activities. I have friends who come from those communities.

- (b) gathering information for the purpose of intelligence related to individuals known or reasonably suspected to be engaged in illegal activities.

I would not be that particular Justice minister that would undermine parts of our intelligence community from gathering intelligence to help us disrupt crime. All of this has nothing to do with carding.

- (c) inquiring into offences that may have been or might be committed;
- (d) inquiring into suspicious activities that may lead to detecting illegal activities;
- (e) another lawful law enforcement activity.

These are the responsibilities that we have entrusted to the members of our law enforcement. I don't know of anyone out there – and I certainly hope that no one in this particular Chamber would put forward an amendment and suggest that we undermine the law enforcement or intelligence-gathering capabilities of our law enforcement in keeping us safe. I would not want to think about it. I certainly wouldn't want to believe that anyone would want us to do so. So what is the issue? The issue is the arbitrary act of certain police officers to stop people because they look like me. That is what I am seeking to prevent. That is what Bill 63 seeks to prevent. Bill 63 accomplishes that in a manner that I am very proud of. I spent a ton of time on this particular bill because it is personal. Apart from being personal, it is the right thing to do.

I've worked closely with and directed my department that it must consult with the office of the Privacy Commissioner to make sure that they confirm that this particular bill complies with their legislation. But I think that, for me, you know, carding – in this bill, section 38.1(5): "A police officer is prohibited from carding." You would not find this particular provision in any law in this country. Alberta will be the first. Alberta will be the first to write a ban on carding in any legislation.

## 5:20

Section 38.1(2):

- (a) "carding" means any attempt to collect information, including personal information, from a member of the public if
  - (i) any part of the reason for the attempted collection of the information is based on a prohibited ground of discrimination, the person's socio-economic status, or the police officer's perception . . .

And just listen to this: a mere perception.

. . . that the member of the public has a characteristic associated with a prohibited ground of discrimination or a person's socio-economic status.

It is in this particular section (2).

- (ii) the attempted collection is done in an arbitrary way.

It's all done. It wouldn't happen, and I dare the police officer anywhere in this particular province, when this bill comes into force, to card. Now this bill makes it an illegal act. I have spent a quality amount of time with the chiefs of police, including the commander of the RCMP. I have heard from the police union writing to the members opposite to stand before this Assembly to commend the government side on putting this particular bill forward. This required enormous political capital to get it done, and we did. It was a promise, because for us in this province it doesn't matter where you come from or what you look like; our legal system is applied to all of us evenly.

Madam Chair, I am proud of Bill 63. All of the concerns that my friend the Member for Calgary-McCall or indeed any other member of the opposition has with this particular bill have been addressed except that they want us to undermine law enforcement.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the minister has said a lot of things, and I can certainly respond to a lot of them. Again, I'm saying that this is not a partisan issue. Also, Alberta's history doesn't start from 2015. There were a hundred years of Conservative regime before that as well. There were many things that were not done. I think that if you're doing this, I appreciate that, but we want you to get this one right.

Minister, through you, Madam Chair, you're saying a lot of things that are absolutely not correct. This bill creates a lot of exceptions to carding. This bill does not ban carding. What this amendment is doing – it has nothing to do with that we are not supporting law enforcement. We appreciate the work law enforcement does day in and day out. But, still, in the last year or so I think we have seen many incidents, global incidents, the murder of George Floyd. People across this continent are demanding change. There is bias, there is discrimination within our system that needs to be addressed. We saw on camera the arrest of Chief Allan Adam of Fort Chipewyan. Those indigenous communities are demanding change. All this amendment was doing: this amendment is asking this government to put a positive obligation on law enforcement to inform citizens of their rights.

They have a right not to answer any question that law enforcement may ask them in nonarrest, nondetention circumstances. All this amendment is doing is that we enshrine the right of Albertans in this legislation that law enforcement, when they stop anyone, inform Albertans of their rights. All this amendment is asking from law enforcement: tell Albertans why you are stopping them. They need to have a legitimate reason to stop someone. That's what this amendment is doing.

There are many community leaders who have raised concern that the government didn't get this right. That includes Chief Allan Adam, who was arrested last year, and the video was all over this country and beyond.

Irfan Chaudhry, a human rights researcher at MacEwan University, said that this bill has potential to “legislate racial profiling.” That's a person who teaches human rights at MacEwan University, a community leader. That's what he is saying.

Then a respected imam in Calgary, Imam Syed Sohawardy, said: “It's carding again. Racism is getting legalized with this bill.”

Vanesa Ortiz, secretary for the Association of Mexicans in Calgary, talked about the gaps in this legislation.

[Ms Glasgo in the chair]

Rishi Nagar, a radio host and also a member of the Calgary Police Service Anti-Racism Action Committee and the antiracism committee for the city of Calgary, said:

My community and my colleagues are very concerned over the way this bill is presented. Anti-racism requires bold steps, not half measures. Many racialized Calgaryans experience disproportionate policing on a daily basis and have called for an end to the practice of carding. Unfortunately, Bill 63 fails to do that and places vulnerable Albertans at greater risk.

Amira Shousha, Alberta regional team lead for the National Council of Canadian Muslims, said:

In other words, it might be OK to card my friends and I and to retain that information under crime prevention activities. That's not progress and that's exactly the problem with carding and street checks in the first place.

Minister, these are people from BIPOC communities who often get disproportionately impacted by carding and street checks. This is what these community leaders are saying. As I said, it's not a

partisan issue for me on this side. We support a complete ban on carding. We recognize the need for law enforcement to interact with citizens. All we want is that citizens also need to be protected. Their rights need to be protected, and this bill doesn't do that.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

As a person of colour myself, after reading this bill, even though I'm a lawyer, I can't tell what will be different when I will get out on the street tomorrow. Nothing will change because this bill is legalizing carding. It's giving greater powers to police instead of regulating that, and it doesn't do anything close to what was recommended in Justice Tulloch's report out of Ontario. That's a justice of the Court of Appeal. I'm pretty sure that he worked for one year to come up with these recommendations, to come up with these definitions. I will strongly recommend that you read that report. At least some semblance of that, if it's reflected in this act, would be acceptable, but in this shape this bill is not acceptable. It's not banning carding; it's not regulating street checks.

Thank you.

5:30

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I just wanted to very quickly – and I won't take that much time on this particular issue – respond to the Member for Calgary-McCall's view that they would want law enforcement to tell citizens why they are being stopped or why they are being asked to provide certain information. I can assure the members of this particular Assembly that that is the case under our current law, but also I want to refer the members of this Assembly and in particular the members opposite to section 38.1(9).

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the collection, recording, retention, storage, use and disclosure of information, including personal information, voluntarily provided by a member of the public, obtained as a result of a non-detention, non-arrest interaction with a police officer, including

- (a) defining any word or expression for the purposes of a regulation made under this section;
- (b) prescribing and respecting the circumstances in which a police officer is permitted to collect, record, retain, store, use or disclose information, including personal information, or is prohibited from collecting, recording, retaining, storing, using or disclosing information, including personal information;
- (c) respecting the conduct of non-detention, non-arrest interactions . . .

Very important.

. . . between a police officer and a member of the public, including the duties that a police officer must fulfill prior to collecting information, including personal information, from a member of the public, or following the collection or attempted collection of that information from a member of the public;

- (d) respecting the retention, storage, use and disclosure of information, including personal information, including the placement of that information in a police database or report and use of that database or report.

Madam Chair, you know, again, I wish that the members opposite and in particular the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall would sit back, away from partisan politics. I have just read it. He just read stuff that people were writing on a bill that I am confident, based on what I am hearing him read into the record – those members may not even have read Bill 63, unless there's something else that they are pursuing. You heard me read to you directly from the bill what

that bill sought to do. Contrast what I read on the record, that will be reported by *Hansard*, said by the Minister of Justice, versus what you heard the Member for Calgary-McCall read into the record. That is the point I am making.

This bill demands the commendation of the Member for Calgary-McCall and the members opposite if they are truly genuine about protecting minority rights, if they are truly interested in banning carding and not making it the subject of political football, just like they did from 2015 to 2019. That was what happened in this province. They know that's how they win elections. That's how they win elections: kick it down the road, play politics with it, tell minority communities "We are your saviour; vote for us," and do nothing. That is what I'm hearing from my own community. That is why many, many people from my community in droves are moving away from these members, because the opposition NDP: for them, this is a solid gold political football. If you want to prove otherwise, we have your statements in this Assembly in *Hansard*, and I have had the opportunity to read and review them.

I have also had the opportunity to review, you know, all of the submissions from minority communities on this particular issue. You know, hon. colleagues, I have spent a ton of time consulting with cultural communities on the Police Act review, the largest review of the Police Act since it came into existence in 1988. I have had the opportunity to sit down with cultural leaders and religious leaders on all of the work we are doing to make sure that in this province racism and discrimination are not welcome.

I have heard them commend this government for banning carding. I have received notes and texts and Facebook Messenger messages and letters to my office commending this government for taking that bold step. Many of them said to me that they never thought that in their lifetime a Conservative government would be the political party that finally brings an end to carding. They told me how hard they worked to get the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, my colleague who I have enormous respect for – they went to him, and they tried to explain the importance of banning this practice. They came here. You know what they told me? All they had was parties, community dances and parties. That's all they get. That's all members of my community get from the members opposite, and they are sick and tired of that. They are sick and tired of parties and community dances. They want real action.

They want concrete action, and that is what the members on this side of the aisle are doing on issue after issue. Bill 38, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, passed in this Assembly in 2020, recognized the First Nation police services and commission for the first time in our province's history. It was not done by the members opposite in all of their four years; it was done by this government, something that the First Nation community leaders have been asking for for decades. We got that done in Bill 38, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

And we are working with them. I have met with all of the First Nation chiefs in this province on the particular work we are doing with respect to the Police Act. In fact, today myself, the Premier, Minister Wilson, Minister Pon . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. minister, I'll remind you not to use names.

**Mr. Madu:** My apologies, Madam Chair. My error.

Today our government met with the chiefs of the Blackfoot Confederacy to continue our important work of reconciliation, of building trust, a functional relationship. That work continues, and I am proud – I am exceedingly proud – of the work that we have done on these stubborn files.

Talk, I've always said, is the easiest thing to do. It's the cheapest thing to do. You know, sometimes people from my community – I

mean, I love them to death, but sometimes when it sounds good in the ear, it must be the right thing. Boom, they jump. And they're beginning to realize that, no, not everything that tastes good is good for you. Not everything that sounds good in the ear is good for you. They are waking up and beginning to realize that indeed they want their problems to be tackled head-on, and that is what we have done with Bill 63.

5:40

I will complete this bill, that I hope will have the blessing of this Assembly, by putting in place a regulation that will complete it, that will show to everyone in this province and in this country that we meant business when we said that carding is bad. It is written right there in subsection (5).

Madam Chair, I do not want us to waste the time of this particular Assembly by embarking on amendment after amendment that achieve nothing. The bill that the Member for Calgary-McCall is looking for is right before him, right before this Assembly. It has got all of the elements.

With that, you know, Madam Chair, I will urge every member of this particular Assembly to vote down amendment A2.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment on Bill 63, the Police (Street Checks and Carding) Amendment Act, 2021. The Minister of Justice in his speech just stated that he wished the Member for Calgary-McCall wouldn't take this debate in a partisan direction, then proceeded to go into a broad discussion of what parties truly care about racialized communities in the province of Alberta, discussing who does what in terms of trying to win elections, making a broad range of accusations about intentions and work of people in an entire party, after saying that he did not wish to be partisan.

The minister went on about political footballs being used to win elections. He went on at great length about having heard from people from the community, about how frustrated they are with progressive governments. Again, Madam Chair, highly partisan comments not applicable to the bill, sharing his personal opinion. I certainly hope he's not suggesting that the wide diversity of black communities in our province are monolithic in their views, be they political or on any particular issue.

I will let the minister know that I am quite comfortable with my reputation of consultation with and representation of black communities in this province. I'm quite comfortable with what they consider in terms of my integrity as an elected official regardless of what his opinion might be. It's unfortunate that the minister chooses to bring that chip on his shoulder to the discussion of a piece of legislation. No one, not my colleague from Calgary-McCall and not myself, has questioned this minister's experiences as a black man, as an immigrant to this country, as someone who has worked to build his life here to support his family and indeed contribute to his community in the way that he has felt best. None of us have even questioned anything about his decision of which party he should choose to run for and which values he chooses to represent. I respect the minister for his decisions and his choices. We had those discussions when he chose to run, and I continue to respect his decision and his choice now.

No one has questioned this minister's intent in bringing forward this bill. I truly believe that the minister is bringing this forward because he believes this is something that needed to be done. I am not going to accuse the minister of having a political motive for doing this. I am not going to be partisan on that issue. I take the

minister at his word that he has the best intent in bringing this legislation forward and accomplishing what we all agree needs to be accomplished; that is, the ending of the practice of carding and the ending of people from racialized communities feeling that they are being targeted by police simply because of the colour of their skin. We are all in agreement on that point. We are all looking to accomplish that goal.

No one has questioned this minister's work on the Police Act review. His continuance of the work that was begun under our government, a long process – and the minister indeed completed that work or is still building on that. I imagine there may be other legislation or regulations or things which may come from that work, but this is a piece of his completion of that work. No one is questioning his intent or the integrity with which he conducted it. I haven't said that, and the Member for Calgary-McCall has not.

What we are saying is that we have a difference of opinion about whether this bill in and of itself accomplishes the goal that the minister has set out. That is not a partisan thing, Madam Chair. We are not coming into this House simply on our own volition. We have also spoken with and consulted with members of racialized communities who feel that there is more that needs to be added to this legislation for it to effectively accomplish the goal of ending discrimination between racialized communities and their interactions with the police. That is not a partisan thing, Madam Chair. That is an opportunity for discussion.

Now, my concern is that the minister seems to feel that simply because he brought this bill forward – and it is true. We did not get to the point of bringing forward legislation during our time in government. I can't dispute that because it's there in the record, that we did not introduce a bill. But that does not mean that the minister should simply then introduce the bill and get a free pass simply because he is the first one to have done so. I think it's still reasonable that we have debate in this House and that we look at what is in the bill.

Indeed, as my colleague from Calgary-McCall, who I know has done extensive research and consideration on this, spoken with racialized communities, and put together thoughtful amendments to look to improve this bill – now the minister shakes his head. He may consider it partisan that anybody would dare deign to suggest that he might not have considered anything, that anyone would dare deign to suggest that anything could potentially be added. Indeed, if the minister feels that it is not necessary, then he can explain that, and we don't need to be partisan in doing so. We can have reasonable and rational debate about whether the provision is or is not needed.

Now, in this particular case the Member for Calgary-McCall has brought forward a provision specifically requiring, stating clearly that police would be required to inform individuals that they're not required to provide information to the police officer and inform the individual the reason for which the police officer is requesting the information from the individual. This is a provision which is not currently included in the bill. This is a provision, I have heard from members of racialized communities, that they feel should be in place, that this indeed should be a requirement in situations where they are stopped by police.

Indeed, this is taken from a recommendation from the independent report which was generated in the province of Ontario from the board of the Independent Street Checks Review in Ontario. So this is not something that my colleague made up out of whole cloth that he introduced for the purpose of delaying the legislation. In his thoughtful consideration and research and discussion with community it was felt that this would be something that would improve the bill and provide greater protection to racialized

communities. That is not a partisan position to take, Madam Chair. That is a suggestion.

5:50

Now, the minister referenced that there is going to be regulation. He talked quite a bit about the information collection part of things, and he talked about: well, we are regulating what they can collect and the circumstances they can collect in, and there will be further regulation on that and discussion with the Privacy Commissioner. That is all well and good, but that does not touch on the amendment that we have in front of us.

This amendment is not talking about what information the police can collect. This amendment is not talking about the circumstances in which they can collect it. It is saying that in the circumstances prescribed and whatever else the minister wishes to bring forward under regulation, regardless of any of those points, once the officer has stopped the individual and chosen the interaction, they must inform the individual of these two basic things: that they are not required to provide information if they should choose not to and the reason for which the officer is requesting that information. Those don't strike me, Madam Chair, as unreasonable asks. Those strike me as a sign of respect, a recognition of the dignity of the individual that is being stopped, an opportunity for that individual to be appraised of their rights.

As I talked about earlier today when we were talking about, you know, some of the things that are in place, checks and balances, it is perhaps a reminder for an officer, not suggesting that officers are going out of their way to abuse their power – I have much respect for police officers. As the minister noted, indeed nobody wants to get in the way of police being able to do their work. But what we are looking at is, in the pursuit of good work, ensuring that it does not have a disproportionately negative impact on the people whom that work involves. It is about finding a balance.

I appreciate that the minister feels that in his discussion with chiefs of police, in his discussion with racialized communities and others he has struck a balance and that it is the right balance. I appreciate what he says when he says that he has spent a good deal of his own personal political capital to achieve this. Fair enough. But the question that we have here is a simple one: is it reasonable to ask an officer, when they stop an individual, to inform that individual that if they do not wish to speak to the officer and do not wish to share information, they do not have to and, secondly, of the reason for which they have stopped that individual? I don't see that as being unreasonable; I see that as being a sign of good faith. Having that as a piece in part of this legislation is a signal to racialized communities that we respect their rights and their dignity.

Now, you may say: it's not necessary; it's assumed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The fact is that there is good reason sometimes to spell things out plainly, particularly in an area where we have had so much difficulty with ambiguity.

Now, the minister talked about – I believe he indicated that there may be some aspect of regulation where it might touch on this, regulations on how information is collected. I suppose this could be included there, but I have not heard the minister say that he was in fact considering that and that that was his reason for not supporting this amendment. Now, certainly, if the minister wants to indicate that he indeed intends to consider this and that is something that he is looking at putting in the regulation, fair enough. I would appreciate hearing that. It would help open things up for the debate. But, secondly, I would say that indeed if that is the intent, I don't see why it cannot live in the legislation as opposed to the regulation, where it is clear and visible and requires, frankly, a higher bar to change.



To be clear, when we are talking about these things – the minister is quite right. This is a long-standing problem. This is a problem that existed before our government came into power. It is a problem that existed while we were in power. It's a problem that's existed while this government has been in power. But that is all the more reason why pieces like this should perhaps be made explicit, because that is about building trust again with racialized communities.

I think we've seen recently what that damage has been, how much that relationship has been hurt in so many ways through so many systems in our society. The discovery just in the last few days of those 215 children in an unmarked grave outside a residential school: the damage done through systems of our society to racialized communities runs deep. When we work on these things and we look to change these things, we want to be sure we are not just doing – I don't want to say "the bare minimum" because I don't want to minimize what the minister is bringing forward, but I think sometimes we have to be willing to step a little further and perhaps do a little more.

I don't think that this is an amendment that should just be simply dismissed out of hand. I disagree that the Member for Calgary-McCall is bringing this forward simply out of a wish to delay. As he has said, we support the ending of carding. Ultimately, I imagine

we will find ourselves supporting this legislation. We just want to make it as good as it can be before then.

The minister is right. This is a historic opportunity, and I will not diminish the fact that he is the one that is bringing it forward, but ultimately let's make sure, then, that we are getting this right, that this will truly accomplish the goal which we share. I promise the minister I am not going to use this as an opportunity to grandstand or try to claim who is the better voice for the community, but I will engage as we have the opportunity to discuss what I think are substantive and well-intentioned amendments to improve this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

**The Chair:** We are back on the main bill, Bill 63, in Committee of the Whole.

Hon. members, the clock now strikes 6 p.m. It is supper. Committee is recessed until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]



## Table of Contents

Members' Statements	
Job Creation.....	5053
COVID-19 Vaccine Procurement and Distribution.....	5053
Provincial Reopening Plan and Economic Recovery.....	5053
LGBTQ2S-plus Pride.....	5053
Kidney Dialysis Service in Lloydminster.....	5054
National AccessAbility Week.....	5054
Support for Businesses Affected by COVID-19.....	5054
COVID-19 Response and Provincial Reopening Plan.....	5055
COVID-19 Response and Economic Recovery.....	5055
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees .....	5055
Oral Question Period	
COVID-19 First-wave Response Review.....	5055
Care Facilities and Seniors' Home Care.....	5056
Kananaskis Country Park Fees.....	5056
Black History Content in Educational Curriculum.....	5057
Child and Youth Well-being Review.....	5057
Rural Care Facilities and Physician Supply.....	5058
Canada Pension Plan.....	5059
Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention.....	5059
Economic Recovery and Child Care.....	5060
School Construction Capital Plan and Edmonton.....	5060
Rural Internet and Utilities.....	5061
Support for LGBTQ2S-plus Youth.....	5061
Indigenous Content in Educational Curriculum.....	5062
Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19.....	5063
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	5063
Tablings to the Clerk .....	5064
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 65 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2021.....	5064
Bill 63 Police (Street Checks and Carding) Amendment Act, 2021.....	5074
Division .....	5074

*Alberta Hansard* is available online at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca)

For inquiries contact:

Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: [AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca)