



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 16, 2021

Day 116

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

Independent: 3

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Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my great pleasure to welcome to the Assembly today a guest of the Minister of Indigenous Relations, Caleb Lazowski. He is a member of the constituency association as well as a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Also joining us today is a very, very special guest seated in my Speaker's gallery. Ms Megan Ducker has been the executive assistant to the Speaker and an employee of the Legislative Assembly Office since 2017. Her husband, Ian, serves as a pilot in the Canadian military. Both of them have given their lives to the service of our country. He's recently been transferred to an air base in Montreal, where they will continue serving our great land. Today is her very last question period, and she will be leaving the LAO at the end of this month. It's my great pleasure and honour to thank her and her husband for both services to this province as well as to our country. To both of you: please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Technology Industry Development

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had a tough road these past few years. We've weathered the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the additional blows of an economic downturn and the global collapse of oil prices. But we are Albertans. We are resilient, and facing adversity with confidence has always been in our DNA. That fighting spirit will pull us through again, and we're already starting to see it.

On the heels of record investments in Alberta's renewable, financial, agriculture, hydrogen, aerospace, biomedical, and tech sectors, creating thousands of jobs and flooding our province with new start-ups, we launched Start Alberta, a new database that connects Alberta's start-ups and investors. Venture capital funds, angel investors, and others can use one platform to locate Alberta companies and make investments relevant to them. A first of its kind in North America, with more than 2,000 companies and more than 200 investors already listed on the platform, Start Alberta will allow our province to move at the speed of business and make Alberta the Silicon Valley of the north. Between 2018 and 2020 we saw the number of tech companies in our province double.

Alberta had a record year for venture capital investment last year, and almost all major banks in the country are projecting that Alberta will lead the country in economic growth this year. We're going to keep building on that momentum and create thousands more high-paying tech jobs.

But those high-skilled positions will need highly skilled people to fill them. Alberta's government is also up to that task. Our jobs now program allows tech companies to hire unemployed Albertans and train them for new opportunities. An unemployed geologist can easily transition to a data scientist, for example. We've seen tremendous uptake in this program so far and have even seen international tech giants like Infosys and Mphasis working to create new training programs for employees in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, our province's future is bright. We are on the cusp of the best summer ever, and soon we're going to be on track to build the strongest economy ever.

30th Legislature, Second Session, Reflections

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, today is likely to be the last day of session for the spring sitting. I'd like to begin by congratulating the Government House Leader on the introduction of the 29th motion shutting down debate in this Assembly this week. That's right: 29 times moving to close debate, shutting out our constituents from being represented in this Chamber. In contrast, over the four years of the last government, time allocation happened just five times. That's right: this House leader is responsible for 85 per cent of all of the time allocation over the last six years.

While I'm sure the House leader is proud of his record of stamping out democracy in this Chamber, this is just another notch on the belt for a government that is doing everything it can to avoid talking to Albertans and to hide things from them. The Premier, his cabinet, and caucus talk a big game about supporting democracy, but it's talk that they've never once backed up.

Let's start with the obvious. The Premier signed a poster promising to support the grassroots members of his party but then told them that he didn't care about their ideas because he was the one with the pen. The UCP leadership race that elected this Premier is still under investigation for voter fraud and identity theft. That's not very democratic. Then he fired the Election Commissioner; the Government House Leader shut down debate three times to prevent any real debate on that corrupt act. The Premier once handed out earplugs to help his MLAs avoid the very real concerns of Albertans. The House leader shut down this Legislature for weeks so the Premier could get a break from his rebelling caucus. And they wrote a recall act, written to protect UCP MLAs from Albertans' anger about the lies and broken promises from the government.

As this session ends, I offer the Government House Leader a friendly word of advice. I know he's gotten used to the white linens, fine wines, and wait service of the sky palace patio, but if he ever decided to come down from the sky palace roof and listen to Albertans, he'd see that while he's been working on ending debate in the Legislature, this government has been doing a great deal of work ending their time in government.

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

High School Graduates 2021

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the months of May and June we see high school students graduating across the province. I'm honoured today to recognize and celebrate all the graduates in my constituency of Cardston-Siksika.

To the graduating class of 2021 throughout Cardston-Siksika, from the north, Siksika Nation high school, to the south, Cardston high school, to the east, Vauxhall high school, and everywhere in between, with too many schools to name in this short member's statement: I want to let each and every one of you know how proud I am of all your accomplishments. Not only have you worked hard to achieve this monumental goal in your lives, which is a great accomplishment in itself; you were able to do it throughout one of the most difficult times any of us have ever been through. The greatest generations in our history are remembered by the trials and tribulations that they overcome, like world wars, famines, depressions, and, in this case, a global pandemic.

This last year and a half has not been easy, especially for young adults in high school. You missed out on social events, competitive sports, seeing friends every day in person, and even, for some, a normal graduation surrounded by family and friends. But you persevered. You adapted your lives and continued to carry yourselves with tremendous grace and pride. Throughout this experience you have learned lessons that will help you throughout the rest of your lives. You learned the value of communication, to adapt quickly, and you learned the value of friendship in hard times. It is a time that these graduates will never forget and for which they will always be remembered.

My advice to the grads, especially those in Cardston-Siksika, is this: never forget where you came from; never forget the people who helped you along the way. To the graduating class of 2021 in Cardston-Siksika and across the province, I want to express my sincerest and biggest congratulations.

Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hate Crimes

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, anti-Islam hate and otherings of Muslims and racialized Canadians are on the rise. In 2011, while he was the citizenship and immigration minister, the Premier banned the niqab at Canadian citizenship ceremonies. He said then that the niqab, and I quote, reflects a certain view about women that we don't accept in Canada. End quote. Then again in 2015 this Premier described the niqab as: a medieval tribal custom. When people in positions of power make such statements, some are likely to perceive the wearer of the niqab to be medieval, outdated, and not Canadian. These statements were designed to other those who choose to wear a niqab and have in fact endangered people wearing the head covering, a niqab.

In 2015 a group of teenage boys in Quebec attacked a pregnant woman and knocked her down while trying to remove her head covering. In 2017 six Muslims were shot dead and 17 others injured in a Quebec mosque. Two weeks ago the Afzaal family was run over for being Muslims. We recently saw a series of attacks on Muslim, niqab-wearing women in Edmonton and Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, this needs to stop, and for that to happen, we need to acknowledge the past wrongs and recommit to standing up against hate and racism. Earlier this week I was encouraged to see the Premier's former colleagues Conservative Members of Parliament Tim Uppal and Michelle Rempel Garner apologize for their role in the niqab ban and the proposed cultural practices hotline. We hope that the Premier will do the right thing and acknowledge his role in this niqab ban and acknowledge the harm and division it sowed and apologize, but he has denied having any role in it even though it's a matter of public record. I call on this Premier to own up to his word, reflect on his actions, and apologize.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

1:40 30th Legislature, Second Session, Reflections

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you listen to the Official Opposition, you might think the sky is falling. The NDP's actions in opposition can be summed up in four words: deceit, tweet, sleep, repeat. But there are so many good-news stories that never get picked up on social media or by the news, and it is times like now when you can stop, take a breath, and listen to some of the great things this government has already done.

We can start with the mental health supports. Did you know that Alberta has spent more on mental health supports during the pandemic than all other provinces combined? Recently we also

launched the Alberta jobs now program, which invests hundreds of millions of dollars to get unemployed Albertans back to work. We also established the Anti-Racism Advisory Council, which is taking real action to stop racism here in Alberta, and on that note, we also stopped the controversial practice of carding, something the last government showed no interest in doing. Our policies in 2020 broke the record for venture capital investment, and we are currently on track for more. The film and television industry is thriving because we increased tax credits and we eliminated preproduction caps. We partnered with organizations to help stop elder abuse. We are helping sexual violence survivors by expanding front-line supports. We cracked down on impaired drivers. We even got rid of that little sticker on your licence plate.

This is just a small snippet of the good-news stories that the media and the NDP unfortunately always choose to ignore, but here in the real world independent economic authorities say that Alberta will lead the nation in economic and job growth this year. How? Because we've done a better job protecting lives and livelihoods, we've got the best vaccine rollout results in Canada, and we've got a common-sense and science-based open for summer plan.

But, Mr. Speaker, in order for us to open, in order for us to do that, we need to get vaccines, so I would request that you get your vaccine, too, because this government might give you a million bucks. You're welcome.

The Speaker: I'm certain that they won't be giving me a million dollars.

Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Ms Pancholi: Every three years the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto produces a report on the assessment of provincial and territorial frameworks for early childhood education in Canada. Specifically, they look at five benchmarks of quality for early childhood education. Despite increasing costs for families, reductions in spaces, and job losses across the sector, the Minister of Children's Services insists that she and the UCP are doing a great job when it comes to early learning and child care in Alberta, but this report, released earlier this month, tells a far different story. The bottom line is that Alberta scored the lowest in all of Canada on early childhood education and child care.

Some of the key findings include that Alberta has one of the highest percentages of children as a population in Canada, yet the UCP spends the lowest in the country per child care space. Compared to other provinces that the UCP loves to compare us against – B.C., Ontario, Quebec – Alberta is the only province that lost child care spaces. Contrary to the minister's claims, Alberta does not provide the highest wage top-up for educators; two other provinces provide more. Our maternal workforce participation rate remains one of the lowest in Canada. In every other province in the country preschool-aged children are getting more support and developing more of the critical skills to set them up for success.

Mr. Speaker, increasing levels of early childhood education leads to better outcomes for children. It increases school success and future earnings. It increases GDP, improves quality of life. It reduces interventions in the K to 12 system, saving taxpayer dollars.

Here in Alberta in the early 2000s we were falling behind all other provinces, which led to the establishment of the early development instrument program to collect data on the gaps and areas of improvement for early childhood education. The UCP cancelled this program. Alberta is now the only province that doesn't report on measures for preschool.

Investing in early childhood education is key to unlocking Alberta's potential. Sadly, we have two more years of this failure

of a government, a failure that Albertans will be paying for for generations to come.

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

Summer Events in Rural Alberta

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're all glad that Alberta is moving forward with its open summer plan and that we will finally be able to get back to normal, hopefully in July. Unfortunately, some events have been cancelled before we had the opportunity to announce our open for summer plan.

I'm pleased to report, however, that rural Alberta stepped up to host some of these cancelled events, beginning with the Rangeland Derby. This event was unfortunately cancelled by the Calgary Stampede this year, but the Dewberry Chuckwagon Racing Heritage Society stepped up and has said that they will hold the races alongside the legendary chuckwagon racer and Dewberry native Kurt Bensmiller.

It's been over 20 months since the horn sounded for any WPCA event, and thankfully that's about to change. Dewberry's races are planning to take place from July 1 to 4, and they will have at least 27 wagons entered to run. Canwest Clydesdales and the Vermilion Agricultural Society are sponsoring the Alberta Draft Horse Classic on July 23, 24, and 25 in Vermilion. With the province-wide heavy horse community banding together to organize a show, it looks like this rural setting will be comparable to or maybe even better than the Calgary show. Finally, the 66th Lea Park Rodeo, which is our outdoor event held 10 miles north of Marwayne, Alberta, has postponed their rodeo based on recommendations from AHS. They've rescheduled to July 23, 24, and 25 and are looking forward to welcoming cowboys and spectators back again.

I am very happy and enthusiastic that we see our rural Alberta communities stepping up and providing Albertans with shows they may have otherwise missed. I'd encourage all members of this House and all Albertans to take a little road trip if they're interested to see just how much rural Alberta has to offer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Drug Overdose Prevention

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, drug addiction and mental illness are not conditions that people decide to adopt; they are illnesses that people are afflicted with and are deadly diseases. Between January and March this year 346 Albertans died from an overdose. Every single one of those precious lives lost is a tragic failure of our society to demonstrate how valuable every Albertan who suffers from the scourge of addiction and mental illness is to us.

Tragically, about 18 months ago my 31-year-old nephew Devin Mckee lost his life to an accidental opioid overdose after a multiyear battle with mental illness and addiction. He graduated with distinction from the University of Lethbridge in 2011, earning a bachelor of management degree. Eight years later he was dead. We didn't recognize his university alcohol consumption as self-medication for depression. When he turned to drugs to hide the pain of mental illness, the family learned how much trouble he was in. His parents and sister and others fought valiantly alongside him to help him overcome his depression and addiction. There were periods of sobriety following treatment programs which ended in relapses. No one felt worse than Devin when he succumbed to relapse. That guilt and shame compounded his battle.

Wrongly, our society blames the addict for their addiction. Sadly, current government policy judges the addict as blameworthy as

well. We are in the midst of an overdose crisis which cries out for an evidence-based, comprehensive program to stop the carnage. The UCP government claims to be doing this, but their actions demonstrate otherwise. The NDP's recent overdose emergency plan is laser focused on harm reduction and keeping people alive, and then if people are able, they can successfully complete a rehabilitation program, knowing full well that relapses will occur, often multiple times. We have a social responsibility to address this pandemic within a pandemic. The UCP's ideological opposition to harm reduction is wrong, and thousands of Albertan families will never forgive them for it.

La Biche Walleye Cup

Ms Goodridge: This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending the first annual La Biche Walleye Cup, and what a whopper it was. This fishing derby caused a big splash throughout Lac La Biche county, bringing out 146 participants from 73 teams to come and fish at beautiful Lac La Biche. This was a very welcoming and family-friendly event, bringing out anglers from all across the region, the province, and the country to participate in this first annual event for top prizes, including a top cash prize of \$14,000. It was amazing to see friends, old and new, come out and enjoy lakeland hospitality at its best.

Walleye must say that I was very impressed as this tournament used technology to ensure environmental conservation was front and centre. Teams took photos of each fish along the measuring stick and then photos of the fish being released. After all photos were submitted, a length-to-weight matrix was used to determine the average weights of each team's fish. The weights from that conversion were then used to determine the winners. But what we also heard a lot of was about the ones that got away. I would like to congratulate all of the winners of this derby, including Chris Suhan and Ryan Johnson, top-place winners; the top mixed team, Cyndy and Douglas Nicholson; as well as the top youth team, Les and Cody Lambert.

It was wonderful to see people come together enjoying the great outdoors, respecting all health protocols, and there wasn't anything fishy about it. I have no doubt that the walleye cup will continue to grow and give an opportunity for Lac La Biche county to show that it truly is welcoming by nature. Thanks to all of the amazing volunteers, participants, and organizers of this amazing event for this incredible success. You organized a great event, hook, line, and sinker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Government Policies and Premier's Leadership

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as we wrap up this session, we should reflect on the damage done over the last few months: \$1.3 billion thrown away on a gamble, grieving families denied the right to seek justice, hikes on camping, cuts to municipalities, and a third wave of COVID-19 made worse by the Premier's refusal to do the right thing. He actually outperformed himself for disappointing people, a feat we didn't think possible after Alohagate. How does the Premier possibly defend a spring session where he lost jobs, lost MLAs, and lost the trust of Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Well, to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, Alberta, based on the last labour force survey, has regained all of the jobs lost during

this pandemic even though our province was hit harder than any other because of the energy price collapse. Virtually every major bank and think tank is projecting that Alberta has the strongest growth in Canada this year. We see the best year ever in Alberta forestry, the best year ever in agriculture, the best year ever in venture capital, the best year ever in film and television. We see multibillion-dollar hydrogen plants coming forward; huge plans for petrochemicals and carbon capture, utilization, and storage; the diversification of our economy; and the creation of jobs.

Ms Notley: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, there are 200,000 Albertans looking for work who expect their government to be focused on what matters to them, jobs. Not a single bill created jobs for Albertans. In fact, Alberta has lost 13,000 jobs since March. More than that, his budget cut jobs in construction, cut jobs in education, and he's still threatening the jobs of 11,000 front-line health care workers. Why doesn't this Premier stop focusing on statues of John A. Macdonald and start focusing on jobs?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the relentless focus of this government from day one has been on job creation. The NDP would have shut down the Alberta economy for the past 16 months with the hardest lockdown in Canada, that would have put hundreds of thousands more people out of work. The NDP wants to raise taxes on job creators by one-third. The NDP constantly wants to throw our oil and gas sector under the bus. They opposed Keystone XL, not because of an investment but because they are ideologically hostile to the oil and gas industry and the jobs that it creates. This government will continue to lead. I'll tell you this: we will lead this country in economic growth and in job creation this year and, I believe, the next.

Ms Notley: Instead of creating jobs, the Premier created controversy around his troubles with the truth. He denied calling COVID the flu, he denied the third wave, he denied breaking his own health orders, and then he denied that he denied it. His contempt for the truth and his utter lack of humility in terms of admitting it has led to the most significant loss of public trust since the sky palace was first built. Will any one minister amongst those over there stand up this summer and call on their boss to do better?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you how the NDP could do better: by at least pretending to stand up for Alberta. Yesterday they voted against giving Albertans the chance to speak to the unfair treatment of this province in the federation through a constitutional referendum on equalization. They voted against a motion calling on the Prime Minister not to fill our Alberta Senate seats until Albertans get to elect their own Senators. Albertans want to know: why is the NDP against greater democratic opportunities for Albertans to speak to these important issues?

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

Federal Policy on Niqabs

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, racist hate has no place in Alberta. In the last six months alone Muslim families have been attacked while shopping for groceries, waiting for the bus, walking the Bow River, and we all felt the pain of the attack in London and were reminded again when yesterday a swastika was painted on the Baitul Hadi mosque. This hate is only fuelled when elected leaders validate and pass discriminatory policies. The Premier contributed to this by banning niqabs during citizenship ceremonies when he was immigration minister. Will he stand up today and apologize for the pain that effort created?

Mr. Kenney: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I was deeply saddened to see the hate-inspired vandalism at the Baitul Hadi mosque, a mosque that I have visited on several occasions, being particularly close to that wonderful community. We condemn that and all other expressions of hatred and vandalism, which is why, unlike the NDP, we have taken real, concrete measures to better enforce hate crime laws, and we have announced the security infrastructure project precisely to help protect mosques, synagogues, and other installations which may be targeted for vandalism or violence, again something the NDP never did. I would invite the NDP to join with us rather than trying to divide . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: When given a chance yesterday, the Premier said, quote: I've never supported a proposed ban. This runs contrary to all government documents, *Hansard* transcripts, and media interviews on TV. He called it, quote, a medieval tribal custom. Quote: I was proud to make that decision. And here he is again on Twitter: "I believe people taking the public Oath of Citizenship should do so . . . with their faces uncovered. Do you agree?" Premier, answer your own question. Do you still agree with your statement made back then?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I was asked why I had supported a niqab ban. I never have. To the contrary, I threatened, as the federal minister for multiculturalism, on behalf of the government of Canada to sue the then PQ government in 2013 for their so-called proposed charter of Quebec values, which would have banned ostensible religious symbols either for people receiving or giving public services. But, yes, I do think it's entirely reasonable that when people are making a public oath in a court, when they're testifying, when they are providing identification, when they're boarding an airplane, they should do so with their identity available and their faces uncovered. That's a reasonable request.

Ms Notley: When this Premier denies his record, he erases the pain felt by Canadian Muslims, and that includes Zunera Ishaq, who was forced to fight in court to overturn his niqab ban, one he claims now never existed. Canadians will not stand for elected leaders who are pathological about not telling the truth.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Notley: Why doesn't the Premier apologize to Canadians for his racist and hurtful policies, and then when he's done that, apologize for yet again telling bald-faced lies to the people of this province?

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: A point of order is noted. I think we can probably deal with this point of order now. The hon. member has had lots of discussion about the use of the word "lies" and accusations of it. I think that it is reasonable that she continues to heed the advice of the Speaker and not use such language that we know is unparliamentary. I invite her to apologize and withdraw.

Ms Notley: I withdraw the word "lie" for describing the Premier's tendency to say things on video which contradict the facts of him saying things on video. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

I will accept the statement by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I think she could learn a significant amount from her

colleagues about how we withdraw and apologize in this House because that certainly wasn't a very good display of one.

Federal Policy on Niqabs

(continued)

Mr. Kenney: Par for the course for the leader of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, face coverings are banned in many Middle Eastern countries, in some European countries. Face coverings are banned for people in the public service in Quebec. I have always opposed those bans. But in Canada, Mr. Speaker, at certain points when individuals are interacting with the state – providing identification, boarding a flight, testifying in court, or, in my view, providing a public oath in a court – it's reasonable to ask that they do so publicly for a few moments while their faces are uncovered. That is not a ban. I announced that policy with a group of Muslim women in Montreal and was awarded an award of recognition by the Association of Progressive Muslims as a result.

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

COVID-19 Delta Variant Health Care in Southern Alberta

Mr. Shepherd: Well, Mr. Speaker, another day, another example of this Premier's casual relationship with the truth. Yesterday we learned from the deputy chief medical officer of health that this government is in fact engaged in modelling of the highly contagious...

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Shepherd: ... COVID-19 delta variant and will have results this week. We also learned that officials have some worries about it. Now, the Premier and the Health minister have repeatedly refused to release modelling at key points throughout the pandemic. We know that this government works overtime to avoid transparency with Albertans, so to the least trusted Premier in Canada: will you commit here and now to releasing the delta variant modelling to Albertans by the end of this week?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted by the hon. the Government House Leader at 1:59.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there is no delta variant modelling. In fact, as Dr. Hinshaw said as recently as last week, the numbers of those cases are too low on the basis of which to do such modelling. I can report to the House that based on yesterday's data, we have about 200 active cases of that variant, which is less than 10 per cent of all active cases in the province. About half of those cases are in one local geographic area, which is not indicative of geographic spread. The good news is that according to Public Health England the mRNA vaccines are extremely effective against that variant.

2:00

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, nothing is more important than honesty and trust in government during a public health emergency, and yesterday the Public Health Agency told Canadians that their reopening advice, predicated on achieving vaccination targets, didn't consider the delta variant. Because of that variant they're now recommending a threshold of 75 per cent of public fully vaccinated before full reopening, which is different than Alberta's plan. Now, speaking of the U.K., U.K. Prime Minister Johnson also adjusted their reopening plans because of the

delta variant. To the Premier: will your government consider changing the reopening strategy and timelines if Alberta's new modelling on the variant suggests more serious outcomes?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP and their fellow travellers are so addicted to lockdowns, they're cheering on a fourth wave. They're even inventing one where it doesn't exist.

We want to thank Albertans for their diligence in getting vaccinated. We're not just focused on the protective effect of first doses, but we are leading Canada on second-dose coverage, and of course we estimate that 15 per cent of our population has immunity from antibodies through natural infection. Mr. Speaker, 76 per cent of Calgarians have received a first dose; 90 per cent of our delta variant cases are in that city. We are confident in the prudence of our plan to proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: I can only assume that's a no.

"Honesty," "trust," and "integrity" are words not commonly associated with this Premier or government, and yesterday media reported that the number of doctors in Chinook's primary health care network has dropped from 120 to 94, a 22 per cent decline. Now, that's causing concern for the people of Lethbridge and much of southern Alberta, yet this government keeps claiming that there are no doctors leaving southern Alberta. Speaking of trust, this government keeps telling Albertans that what they see with their eyes and what they experience on a daily basis isn't happening. Now that the data is out, will the Premier stop gaslighting Albertans and take action on the crisis in primary care in southern Alberta?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:02.

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, besides the point, as I've made in this House before, that the NDP continues to try this false narrative that we are hiding information when we are providing more information and more data to Albertans than any other province, when it comes in particular to primary care in the south zone, we actually know that we have more coverage and more physicians in the south zone than we do in the other nonmetro zones in the province. Now, of course, we do understand that we can't tell family physicians how to run their practices. We're going to continue to work to increase supply of physicians outside of the major metro areas of the province and continue to work with those, understand what the issues might be in Lethbridge, and we'll continue to work with them.

Critical Worker Benefit

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, it's been 89 days since the application portal for the critical worker benefit has closed, and my office is still receiving e-mails from employers daily wondering why they don't have this money for their staff. It's been 119 days since the government launched applications for the CWB, without talking to workers, with a portal that compromised over 200 Albertans' personal information and with thousands of complaints from workers around the eligibility. It's been 405 days since the federal government announced the money to the province. Can the Premier tell us: where is the money, and where are the payments?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. We're continuing to work with our minister of labour on making sure that we get the critical worker benefit out to Albertans

that have applied. As of now we've had over 98,000 applications that were approved and received the critical worker benefit. We've had 4,500 employers that received and distributed the critical worker benefit. We're going to continue to make sure that we work with people to get this program executed and out the door, just as we have with our relaunch grant. We've had – the vast majority of the applications are processed in a very short period of time, 10 to 14 days, in that program, but there are certain ones that require follow-up. That sometimes takes a little bit of time, but we're going to make sure that we continue to work with Albertans.

Ms Gray: Every other province got this money out the door a year ago. What happened to speed of business? Mr. Speaker, the Premier stood up and told Albertans last spring that their work was essential, that essential businesses had to stay open, and that our essential front-line workers were heroes. Fast-forward to this fall. The government finally acts on the \$350 million from the feds, and he tells the same workers that they just weren't critical enough. Will the Premier stop hiding the numbers, the real numbers, and tell Albertans how many critical workers were denied this benefit? Don't just share the good numbers; share them all.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, just as I mentioned in my last answer, we had close to 100,000 Albertans who received the critical worker benefit. On top of that, let's talk about jobs happening right now. We're at 69.5 per cent of Albertans who have received that first dose. We're almost at that 70 per cent. It's time to get Albertans back to work. We want the NDP to support our reopening for summer plan to get Albertans back into the workforce safely. Alberta is forecast to lead the country in GDP growth and job growth. That's some good news for Albertans.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I appear to have to remind this minister that this money was announced during the first wave. We are now in the end of the third wave, and there are still critical workers wondering where their cheques are. Other provinces got the money out the door as a wage top-up without the hoops and ladders for front-line workers to qualify. This Premier sat on his hands, left money on the table in Ottawa for over 250 days, and then designed a program cumbersome to apply to, and it excluded thousands of essential workers. Will this government and this Premier finally tell workers why they were excluded and how many have been denied?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to be transparent with Albertans on the various programs that we've launched throughout this pandemic, from the relaunch grant which has provided hundreds of millions of dollars, almost close to a billion dollars, of support to small businesses across Alberta, including the \$465 million critical worker benefit program. We have been there with Albertans from day one throughout this pandemic. But right now it's time for the NDP to get onboard with reopening Alberta, getting people back into the workforce. We're going to lead the country in economic growth as well as job creation this year and forecasted for next year as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution by Pharmacies

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pharmacists throughout Alberta have been integral to the vaccine rollout, particularly in rural Alberta, where it is critical to ensuring that people have access

to vaccines as close to home as possible. Can the Minister of Health please update us on the number of pharmacies that are participating in the vaccine rollout and the number of vaccines delivered by pharmacists?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Pharmacies have worked incredibly hard to support Albertans and to protect Albertans through the COVID-19 vaccine. More than 1,400 pharmacies out of 1,500 or so across the province are administering the vaccine in every region, in every health zone of the province. They've so far administered more than 1.4 million doses of the vaccine. We could not safely roll out this vaccine without them as partners.

Today I got my second dose from a local pharmacist in Edmonton. A shout-out to the Migdaddy family and their pharmacy, and thank you for the shot today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that as we begin to get closer and closer to 70 per cent, many pharmacies in rural Alberta are asking for more vaccines to help ensure that second doses are available and given that there have been concerns expressed that not enough vaccines are reaching every corner of our province, what is the Minister of Health doing to ensure that rural Alberta pharmacies will receive all of the vaccines that they require?

Mr. Shandro: That's a great question, Mr. Speaker. We're giving pharmacies as many doses as possible while still making sure that all pharmacies in the province can receive a minimum amount. Each pharmacy can order more doses on a weekly basis, and we try to fill as much of each order as possible while still providing each pharmacy with that minimum amount. This allows pharmacies all across the province to keep administering doses to Albertans and to be an important part of the reason why we are national leaders in our capacity for getting the vaccine out to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the end of restrictions may be in sight but pharmacists will continue to play a trusted role in vaccine distribution for months to come and given that pharmacists continue to make sure that everyone who wants a vaccine gets access to one, to the Minister of Health: what will the government be doing to ensure that pharmacists are essential to combatting vaccine hesitancy and making sure that vaccines are available for months to come?

Mr. Shandro: That's a great question, Mr. Speaker, because we know that pharmacies are, as she said, trusted health care providers. For many Albertans, pharmacists are the professionals that we see most often. We have worked with the provincial college and pharmacy association since day one so that pharmacists can have the information that they need to be able to educate patients, and that includes detailed information on the emerging research and changes in the rules of our vaccine rollout. We'll continue to provide materials to help them to fight vaccine hesitancy in the days ahead.

2:10

Coal Development Policies

Ms Ganley: A new study has found that the UCP's plan to mine for coal in the eastern slopes would pose a generational threat to our

vital downstream water and our foothills. It was commissioned by the Livingstone landowners and found that new mines would only be one-quarter reclaimed in 50 years, yet in their effort to strip-mine our Rockies, the UCP has refused to examine the impacts of coal mining on our land and water. Why is the UCP government refusing to look at the impacts of coal mining on land and water despite overwhelming opposition from Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to raise a very serious matter. This past weekend two members of the New Democrat caucus tried to trespass on Piikani First Nation sovereign land.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: They had to be stopped, Mr. Speaker, because the chief in council had to deploy security to tell these New Democrat members that they were not welcome on Piikani reserve land. The Piikani First Nation wants an opportunity at responsible resource development because they want to move their people to prosperity, but the NDP is instead trying to inflict its left-wing eco-colonialism on that nation.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:10 by the Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Given that the report also concludes that the current government has failed to consider the damaging effects that coal mining would have on our land and that we already know that this government failed to examine the impacts of coal mining on the tourism industry and given that the report's author said that the lack of consultation with stakeholders left them with no choice besides going to the scientific community outside of government, why is this government continuing to risk jobs, ignoring the disastrous impact of coal mining on other sectors of the economy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Alberta has some of the strongest water regulations in the world and will continue to. Nothing has changed in regard to water when it comes to coal, and it will not. That's been made clear in this House and outside this House.

But, again, to the Premier's point: when is the Official Opposition going to rise and apologize to the Piikani people for the behaviour of their members this weekend? It's a simple thing. Just apologize.

Ms Ganley: Given that the report also said that a large number of scientists inside the government are deeply concerned about this issue but they're being ignored by this government and given that everyone, from landowners to ranchers to country music stars, is opposed to coal mining in the eastern slopes – in fact, according to the government's own survey, 90 per cent of Albertans are opposed – why is the current government ignoring the science, their own officials, Albertans, and making backroom deals with foreign coal companies to strip-mine the Rockies?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the government is not ignoring all of those people; we are listening to them very seriously. That's why the Minister of Energy has a coal consultation process. The science is taking place in Alberta Environment and Parks, and this issue is important. It's been going on for a decade. I'm going to have more to say about that, actually, the next steps for the department, next week.

But what is happening right now, Mr. Speaker – let's be clear – is that the Energy minister is working to clean up the mess that that member made when she was in government, which was to open up

category 2 lands without any consultation for coal development. That was not this side of the House. That was not the United Conservative Party government. That was that member when she was in government. So while she's apologizing to the Piikani, maybe she can apologize for that.

Edmonton Downtown Core Revitalization

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the city of Edmonton has recently committed \$5 million to the downtown vibrancy strategy to help fund a two-year plan to support public spaces, residents, and businesses in the downtown core. Now, this work is vital to the economic future of Edmonton and the entire capital region, which includes 21 municipalities. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: will this UCP government work with the city of Edmonton to develop and fund a strategy to revitalize Edmonton's downtown core, and if not, why not?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we've been engaging with the business community in both of our major centres, Calgary and Edmonton, on the future of their downtowns. We struck a working group for the city of Calgary to respond to the city of Calgary's report and their plan. We're going to continue to work with the city of Edmonton on their future plans here as well. We're working together to pull together a group of community leaders to give us advice on the future of the downtown community of Edmonton and surrounding area as well.

Mr. Bilous: They also need funding.

Given that successful revitalization of Edmonton's downtown will need local knowledge and rely on strong relationships with stakeholders who know the issues and given that the NDP opposition has 19 Edmonton MLAs, who have relationships with the locals that are critical to this work, and given that this government has just one seat in Edmonton, for now, and the UCP government clearly doesn't understand the needs of downtown Edmonton, will the government commit to involving the Member for Edmonton–City Centre, me, and other members of the Official Opposition in any work it does to revitalize Edmonton's downtown core?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the economy, when it comes to the future growth of Alberta, it's a bit rich for the NDP to try and create advice. They don't even want to cheer on the fact that Alberta is leading the country and is forecast to lead the country in GDP growth this year and job creation this year alone. On top of that, 14,000 more people are working in energy right now than before the pandemic began. We're not going to be taking advice from the NDP when it comes to the economy, but we're always here to listen. We have an open door when it comes to people with policy suggestions along the way.

Mr. Bilous: Given that 60,000 downtown Edmonton office workers stayed home during the pandemic and 35,000 postsecondary students were forced to learn online and given that this UCP government continues to neglect the city of Edmonton – for example, the U of A has been cut more than any other postsecondary in the province – and given that the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation spends 85 per cent of his time promoting Calgary and only 15 per cent of his time promoting the rest of the province, including the city of Edmonton, Edmontonians can see that this government has no interest in supporting their city. Is it really your government's strategy to continue to ignore Alberta's capital?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the members opposite, we can't even get the NDP to acknowledge when companies are moving offices and hundreds of jobs to Alberta. The NDP is silent. Crickets on that end. We are proud of the investments that are being attracted to all of Alberta: Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Red Deer. Just last week: a \$1 billion-plus clean hydrogen project right here in our capital region, right in the city of Edmonton. That is good news. There's a bright future for the city of Edmonton, the capital city, for our province. We're proud of this place. Go Oilers go on many fronts, but I cheer for the Flames just a little bit more.

Alberta in Canada

Mr. Barnes: After a considerable delay Alberta finally announced their equalization referendum question. This is a step in the right direction for fulfilling election-time promises, but there are some noticeable absences. Equalization is only one of a number of issues raised by the Fair Deal Panel. Other referendum questions included the creation of an Alberta pension plan and police force. The Premier has previously committed to holding additional referendums. To the Premier: when will Albertans get to see the rest of our referendum questions, or is Alberta's autonomy no longer a priority of your government?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, more than two years on it's still evident to me that that member still hasn't gotten around to reading the United Conservative Party election platform because there was no reference to an Alberta pension plan or Alberta police force in that document. He seems to have imagined that as a figment of his imagination. That is why we've been engaged in proper consultation and study. Now, I know the member opposite has said: just do it. I'm afraid that creating something as complex and consequential as a provincial pension plan or police force is not as simple as snapping your fingers. It requires very serious diligence.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, that was from the Fair Deal Panel.

Given, and I quote, "We will, as committed in our platform, hold a referendum on an amendment to the Constitution to entrench property rights in Alberta," end quote, and given that that quote is the Premier at the 2019 Manning Conference, given Albertans believed they were electing a Premier that was committed to the Alberta agenda, it seems like the least popular Premier in Canada is struggling again to fulfill promises. To the Premier. You promised Albertans a referendum on enshrining property rights for over two years. There's no question ready. Is amending the Constitution no longer your priority?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have the platform right here, 370-some commitments; 85 per cent of them have been either completely delivered on or substantially delivered on just halfway through this government's mandate.

With respect to the entrenchment of property rights, this government is pursuing that, as committed, through a special select committee of the Legislature to study that matter, which is a matter of great legal complexity. You know, that member came to me with a proposed private members' bill a few months ago not even realizing that all of those concepts were already embedded in the platform on which this government will deliver.

2:20

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted them to happen.

Given, again I quote, "We would not make a decision to establish an Alberta pension plan or an Alberta provincial police force unless the majority of Albertans were to endorse those proposals in a fair

and democratic referendum," end quote, and given that that quote is from the Premier's 2019 Manning speech, yet I don't see a question on either issue, and given that organizers need time before October to campaign around this Premier's dramatic fall in popularity, to the Premier: when will you get off your sky palace patio and finally make Alberta's position in Confederation a priority for your government?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, no government in modern Alberta history has done more to assert this province's autonomous role within the Canadian federation. There will be a referendum, as committed, on October 18 on the principle of equalization. There will be a Senate election. There will be additional news about prospective other referenda. We continue to very seriously study the strengths and possibilities of strengthening Alberta through a provincial police force and a provincial pension plan. These are not simple matters. They must be done with great care and diligence.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Member Loyola: Last Friday the government finally announced that they will be implementing a new provincial hate crimes unit. We, along with members of the community, were asking for this unit to be created not for months but for years. The UCP finally acquiesced after the atrocious news of the terrorist attack in London. Members of the Muslim community have said that thoughts and prayers are not enough; they need more action. The provincial hate crimes unit is a good start, but it leaves many questions. Albertans are asking: how will the new provincial hate crimes unit include the participation of the community, or will it function as a centralized body under the control of the minister only?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Let me thank the member for that very important question. I can assure the member that this government is doing everything it can to make sure that we build a society in which everyone, including our Muslim brothers and sisters, can live in peace and quiet in our province. That is why I was proud, you know, to announce the establishment of the hate crimes co-ordination unit as well as the hate crimes community liaison and followed up with the Alberta security infrastructure program to protect our Muslim communities.

Member Loyola: Given that members of the community see through your rhetoric – they want an answer – and given that those who commit hate-motivated crimes seem to be emboldened due to the lack of action from this government, not denouncing these acts, especially when black Muslim women are being attacked in Edmonton, how does the government intend to address the numerous attacks against Muslim women specifically? How do they intend to support and encourage people to report hate crimes, whether they are victims or witness to them?

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, I can assure that particular member that we have done more to ensure the protection of cultural minorities in our province than in the four years that the NDP spent governing our province. We have been clear that this is a province where you can come to live your full life in quiet and in peace, and we will do everything we can to make sure that all Albertans, including those from the Muslim community, realize their dreams here in our province.

Member Loyola: Given that one of the victims of anti-Muslim hate in Edmonton was actually discouraged from filing a hate-motivated

crime by an Edmonton police officer and given that discouraging victims to file in this way seems to be a regular occurrence from what I am hearing from members of the community, does the Minister of Justice intend to implement sensitivity training to address systemic racism within all levels of law enforcement, complementing the work of the provincial hate crimes unit? If not, why not?

Mr. Madu: You know, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate. In 2016, 2017, 2018 members from the Muslim community were on the steps of this Legislature to protest carding, to appeal to the members opposite to ban carding. You know what many of them said? In conclusion, they didn't think that carding was a problem. On November 20, 2020, we delivered on that particular promise to ban carding, and we followed that up with Bill 63. On this side of the aisle we are taking action to solve problems that have been flagged for us by the community, not virtue signalling or politics.

School COVID-19 Response and Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: The government's response to this pandemic has been to act last and to act least. Last year the Education minister ignored school boards when they said they were worried about distancing, PPE, and transportation. Because she failed to support schools properly, the minister was forced to shut all of them down three times. Now the Premier has warned Albertans about a spike in cases and new variants coming this fall. Will the Education minister make schools safer for the fall, or is she set on repeating the mistake she's made in the past?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member – first of all, I have to clarify that she's taking my calm remarks completely out of context and reflecting the NDP's total, perhaps wilful, ignorance about the epidemiology. Of course there will be increases in infections based on the seasonality of diseases of this nature like there always is with the flu, but by that point with 75, perhaps 80 per cent double-dose vaccine coverage the pressure that this will place on the hospital system will be negligible. There will continue to be COVID, but it will not constitute a pandemic threat. What doesn't the NDP understand about that?

Ms Hoffman: Given that the Premier's failure to support the education system during this pandemic has meant that students had to transition multiple times between online and in-person learning and given that this has meant that many students have fallen behind and given that the UCP has cut more than \$600 million from the budget that students should have received, Mr. Speaker, COVID and a \$600 million cruel cut has resulted in students being hurt. Will the minister at least give back kids the supports that they would have had under the NDP so that they can catch up?

Mr. Kenney: I can't believe that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is still trying to hawk the ridiculous suggestion that the NDP made that we were going to double the number of classrooms and schools from out of nowhere. Nowhere in the world did that because it's impossible, Mr. Speaker. What the NDP really wanted from day one: they tried to feed hysteria and fear amongst parents and teachers irresponsibly. We thankfully have not lost a single person in this province under the age of 20 to COVID, yet they continue to try to spread fear irresponsibly.

Ms Hoffman: Given that students' mental health has been impacted by this pandemic, Premier, and given that this was not helped by the Premier's or minister's mass firing of support staff that many students relied on and given that while a working group

is a good start, students actually need help now and this minister and Premier need to step up, can the Premier explain if students and families will be on their own again, as they have been for the last two years under his leadership, or if he will finally provide any new supports to support students' mental health?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the first month of the pandemic this government announced \$53 million of additional mental health support, much of it dedicated specifically for children, including through community organizations and the kids help line. That was more than all other provinces combined in dedicated mental health support. The Minister of Education has outlined a robust plan to provide additional educational support over the summer to younger school kids who may have fallen behind in their learning with respect to math and reading in particular, but those kids would be much further behind if the NDP had shut down all of the schools for the past 16 months.

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

Hydrogen Industry Development

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent announcement from Air Products, a global leader in hydrogen production, highlighting its \$1.3 billion investment in Alberta is very welcome news. But many of my constituents in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo working in Alberta's cherished energy industry are curious to understand what benefits this new technology will bring to our province. Can the minister explain how the emerging hydrogen industry will benefit the province's extremely important energy sector and how it will affect its hard-working and skilled workforce?

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The global hydrogen market is estimated to be worth 2 and a half trillion dollars by 2050 and create 30 million jobs. Our energy expertise, abundant natural gas feedstock, and massive CCS ability positions us to become world leaders in clean hydrogen production. Hydrogen is going to propel the energy economy forward, and Alberta will lead the way.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a given that one of the highest-growth industries to lead the global economy will be hydrogen-based, and these hydrogen products have excellent potential for continued development here in Alberta. Can the minister explain how the government will endeavour to ensure that we attract the job-creating and innovative projects and all the investment that goes with that?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The global CEO of Air Products said last week that they picked Alberta for the location of their first blue hydrogen facility because of the advocacy of the Premier and his team. In addition to TIER funding, our government is prepared to fund up to 12 per cent of the capital costs of any blue hydrogen facility in the province through our Alberta petrochemicals incentive program. Global hydrogen demand is forecast to increase 10-fold. That's why APIP also allows for hydrogen applications to support ambitious clean energy projects.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is a given that over 30 countries have created hydrogen strategies backed by more than \$87 billion in government funds and recognized that large capital investments supporting the hydrogen industry are being made here in Alberta. Can the minister speak to the level of support being offered to the hydrogen industry relative to other global competitors? How can we compete against so much money and so many people?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, Alberta could be one of the lowest-cost producers of hydrogen in the world. Supplying global markets will unlock remarkable prosperity for our province. In addition to APIP, we are developing ways to spur local hydrogen demand to support scalable investments. We will do this by integrating hydrogen into heating, transportation, manufacturing, and more. Growing our hydrogen economy is at the core of our hydrogen road map, which, after extensive consultation and preparation, will be ready for implementation later on this summer.

Freedom to Care Act

Ms Goehring: After today, regulations in this province will no longer mean anything. Bill 58 puts in the hands of the minister of culture the ability to grant exemptions to any regulation for any organization, and every stakeholder we have spoken to has concerns about the safety implications for clients, staff, and volunteers. The minister and the Premier insist that this is just red tape that is getting in the way of people doing good but have denied multiple attempts by the opposition to put common-sense limits in place. Will the minister reconsider this position and take exemptions to occupational health and safety regulations off the table in Bill 58?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this was discussed in detail last night in this Chamber. I suspect we'll discuss it as we continue the important debate around Bill 58. To be clear, the bill does have limitations within the bill itself. That was discussed in great detail yesterday, but what is shocking – and, quite frankly, as the former member of leadership of a great nonprofit in this province I am shocked to see that the NDP has chosen to focus their time in this Legislature on filibustering legislation that helps people keep care of the homeless, that helps people keep care of vulnerable people in our community. Shame on the NDP. They can't drop the politics even on volunteers inside our province.

Ms Goehring: Given that Bill 58 allows for nonprofit exemptions to any regulation in the province and given that this bill also allows for the minister to designate any organization as a nonprofit for the purpose of allowing these exemptions and given that the long-term care sector is responsible for the safety and care of vulnerable Albertans and given that the Leader of the Opposition introduced an amendment that would have prohibited exemptions to the regulations that govern this sector, which the UCP voted down and the Premier again referred to as red tape, can the same minister please tell this Assembly which regulation she views as most burdensome, the need to feed or clean patients?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it was abundantly clear in the debate last night that the NDP's main concern is with volunteers. Again, as a former executive director of an organization of 11,000 volunteers I'm appalled by that and the lack of understanding of the importance of volunteers within our social safety net within the province. The NDP has focused their time filibustering a bill that will help people be able to feed people at churches and be able to go out to help people within their community, because, at the end of the day, the NDP only works for union members. It's fairly clear.

Maybe if the volunteers start paying dues, the NDP will stick up for them.

Ms Goehring: Given that throughout debate on Bill 58 the minister insists that it will be used for emergency purposes and given that at the same time we have Bill 70 in the House, that speaks to protect operators in the long-term care sector from being sued because of failures to keep up with regulations in the emergency of the pandemic, and given that Bill 58 has no actual requirement in the legislation for an emergency reason, opening the door to ongoing health and safety issues for all Albertans, to the same minister. This afternoon we will put forward an amendment that will bring this proposed legislation more in line with your stated intent. Will you do the right thing and ensure that the amendment passes? Yes or no?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, will the NDP do the right thing and stop filibustering legislation that will help volunteers working to help the vulnerable inside our communities? That's the real question. The NDP last night spoke against the good Samaritan act. Does she want our volunteer search and rescue crews to stop going out and helping Albertans when they get lost? Does she want people not to pull over on the side of the road and not help people who need first aid because they're concerned that the NDP is going to get rid of the good Samaritan act? It's shocking that the NDP – they show their cards every time. They only stand with union members. They're against volunteers, they're against nonprofits, and they only want to do what they do.

PDD Program Wait Times

Ms Renaud: There are approximately 2,000 disabled Albertans still on a wait-list to receive funding from PDD for staffing that will allow them to live in their communities. While thousands linger, this minister and her officials continue to say that they're prioritizing based on health and safety, but if someone is already on the wait-list, it's already demonstrated that they need the supports. To the minister: how many people are currently on the wait-list? Is there a plan to address the wait-list, and will you table that in this Chamber?

Thank you.

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. We do know that there is a wait-list for PDD right now. Unfortunately, this has been a pre-existing problem. It wasn't created when this government came into power. Nonetheless, that program is currently under review. We are hoping to whittle away at this wait-list, and we are waiting to get back some more reports and some more information on the statistics.

Ms Renaud: Whittling is not going to cut it.

Given the silence that we see from this minister, as people struggling to access PDD supports shows that she either has no plan or no worries about the outright trauma these policies and actions have caused – given an example: an older person with a developmental disability lived a life with her older parents that can no longer care for her, but she's not determined to be the one at the top of the list. What criteria specifically are being used to move people off the list?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned, we do have a wait-list. It's unfortunate, but we are looking at mechanisms to try to get through this wait-list right now. We do have criteria in place that

make sure that those who have urgent needs are taken care of right away so that they are not lingering on any type of a wait-list. The PDD program is almost a \$1 billion investment, and certainly it does require further work.

Ms Renaud: Given, Mr. Speaker, that we know that people who have made it through to the wait-list have been determined to need the supports – that’s a fact. We also know that the government officials tell us that sometimes people are on wait-lists because service providers don’t have vacancies. That’s incorrect. Given that I’ve spoken to these providers – they do have vacancies; what they don’t have is a commitment for funding – will the minister correct that information or clarify that information? Is it that there’s no money or there are no service providers? Which is it?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this program is under review. It is an almost \$1 billion investment for over 14,000 clients, and there is room for improvement. We are looking at those opportunities to make sure that those who are most deserving and in need of support get that support. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has the call.

Federal Equalization Program Referendum

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A central pillar of the UCP campaign platform was standing up for Alberta. That is why our government introduced Motion 83, which would pose a referendum question on equalization for Albertans to vote on in the next municipal election. This referendum will give Albertans direct say on whether or not they support the current equalization formula. Based on my interaction with Albertans, they don’t, except for the NDP, who voted to continue sending billions of dollars to Ottawa and vote against Alberta’s best interests as recently as last night. That’s a new low, even for the NDP. To the Minister of Justice: how will a referendum question on equalization help Alberta stand up to Ottawa?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Cardston-Siksika for that very important question. In 2019 Albertans elected the United Conservative government to put an end to the Trudeau-NDP alliance and fight for a fair deal for our province. That’s exactly what this referendum is all about. Equalization has been fundamentally unfair to our province, pulling billions of dollars out of our province even during times of economic hardship and funnelling them into provinces with strong, even booming economies. I am proud to be a government that is following up on the commitment that we made to Albertans. Another promise made and another promise kept.

2:40

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our party platform involves standing up for Alberta as one of its top priorities and given that the current equalization formula is tilted against Alberta’s best interests as it sends billions to Ottawa, who then gives the lion’s share to Quebec, and given that the Prime Minister unilaterally renewed the current equalization formula in 2018 and given that this renewal was met with utter silence from the former Premier – so shameful – and given that the former Premier failed Albertans, can the minister tell the House and all Albertans what this referendum on equalization means for the province?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This referendum, if passed, would send a powerful message to all of our country and indeed to Ottawa that Albertans are prepared to fix this unfairness against their province and their people. We are all looking forward to this vote in October of this particular year. The question, however, is whether or not the NDP will join us and stand up for once for our province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Motion 83 was debated and voted on last night and given that the NDP voted against this motion because they can’t be bothered to defend Alberta’s best interests and given that voting against this motion means that the NDP supports a structurally unequal partnership with the federal government, to the minister: why on earth would anyone vote for more Ottawa in Alberta, especially a party that had a chance to renegotiate this formula when they were in government not that long ago?

The Speaker: I might provide some caution to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika. It’s almost like he’s trying to relitigate a decision that’s already been made by the Assembly, but I’ll allow the Minister of Justice to answer should he choose to do so.

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, it is shocking why the NDP would vote against a motion for Albertans to stand up for their own interests. I have always said that there is nothing democratic in the name “NDP,” and we have seen that. You know, they did not stand up for Alberta when it comes to Energy East, the Keystone XL, and all of the pipelines that are right now in jeopardy in this particular country. I am proud once again of a government that will stand up for Alberta, defend Alberta, and defend our vital economic interests.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m tabling the requisite five copies of a letter that is signed by organizations from civil society, labour, senior citizens. In total they represent hundreds of thousands of workers and Albertans. This letter is in strong opposition to Bill 70. I will just briefly say that through the debate the government has talked a lot about the people who support. A lot of the workers do not, and they are pleased to have this tabled today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m tabling part of the UCP campaign promises around the promises’ intent around the recall legislation: the promises and the intent were to be around the United Kingdom, around the U.S.A., and British Columbia. It’s clear that Bill 52 did not meet expectations by putting in higher thresholds and a confirmation vote, another broken promise.

The Speaker: I’m not convinced that tablings is the time to prolong debate but appreciate your efforts.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 1:59 and again at 2:02 – I'm not sure if these can be dealt with in one . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: They can, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader raised two points of order at those two particular times. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can deal with both my points of order at once if it pleases you. I rise today on this point of order because, frankly, the opposition at this point is just showing utter disdain for the rules and the practice of this Assembly with their continued use of language that shows that all they want to do is just try to find new and creative ways and sometimes, quite frankly, not creative ways to call other MLAs liars inside this Chamber. They know that that's against the rules. You've had to correct them today on that.

They also know that they are not permitted to do indirectly what they can't do directly. The Leader of the Opposition used some terms today. That was dealt with inside question period. I won't be raising that point of order. But after you dealt with that, the next member of the opposition caucus then got up, and in his set of questions the MLA for Edmonton-City Centre says, "And then when he's done that" – and he's referring to the Premier, Mr. Speaker – "apologize for yet again telling bald-faced lies to the people of this province." No; sorry. That was the Leader of the Opposition. I apologize. After she did that and you corrected that, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre said, "Another example of this Premier's casual relationship with the truth." He also said, "Will the Premier stop gaslighting Albertans?"

Mr. Speaker, you've been clear on this to this Assembly. If the Official Opposition wants to continue to break, first of all, the traditions of this place and, second of all, to use inflammatory language, which, frankly, is also not true, to be very, very clear, they are going to continue to create disorder inside this Chamber. As we are likely preparing to leave for the summer either today or tomorrow – I don't want to presume when we will end – I think it's important that we end with clear instructions to this Chamber, because if this is the way that the Official Opposition is going to continue to act, one of two things happens. Either the government is going to have to rise that way to be able to defend themselves, which will then take it down into complete disorder, or quite frankly the Official Opposition does not deserve to have government members stand up and answer their questions if that's the way that they're going to treat this Chamber.

I do suggest, first of all, that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre rise and apologize and withdraw those blatantly inappropriate remarks and that, second, Mr. Speaker, we finally deal with this, once and for all, because if the Official Opposition is willing to ignore your instructions seconds after you give it to their leader, they are never going to listen to them at any point.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this raised point of order, I will withdraw the remarks that are under question.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I would like to reiterate that on at least five occasions in the past eight sitting days I have addressed this with members of the

Chamber on very similar types of issues and the use of all of the creative ways to try to do indirectly what we can't do directly. I hope that when we return in the fall, we will take a much better tone.

I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. Opposition House Leader rose at 2:10 on a point of order.

Point of Order Allegations against Members

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h) specifically but also (i) and (j). In this case, I believe that the Premier and the government caucus showed utter disdain for the rules of this place, having only been warned by you the day before on this very matter. If this is the way that the government is going to act, we will have challenges. In this case, the Premier quite directly said and accused members of my caucus of trying to trespass. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but I wrote it down at the time, and I believe that he literally said that those members tried to trespass. This is a criminal act that he is accusing other members of. This is one of the most serious allegations he can make.

Now, I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday you chastened the Government House Leader but did not find a point of order because he had not crossed that line, but here we see your leniency leading to the government going further and further in their behaviour that is counter to the practices of this House. At the time yesterday you said that the Government House Leader clarified that at no point did he accuse the member of doing something criminal and therefore did not make an accusation about the criminality of the event. Well, when the Premier accused our members of trying to trespass, he did.

This is a point of order. We request that the Premier apologize and withdraw and not play games with serious matters such as these when our members did no such thing.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, to be clear, you did rule yesterday on this issue that there was no point of order. The reality at the time is that I referred you to an article written by one Mr. Dale Woodard of the *Lethbridge Herald*, who, interestingly enough, wrote another article shortly after question period yesterday clarifying what did take place that day, making it very clear that the Member for Lethbridge-West, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and others joined a convoy going onto Piikani First Nation land. Let's be very, very clear what that is according to this. If the newspaper is reporting this wrong, then the hon. member should take that up with the media. They're quoted inside this article, and nowhere inside this article do members say that they were not part of that convoy trying to enter Piikani land. On their way into Piikani land, they ran into a roadblock that had been put up because the Piikani First Nation people, according to this article, had been notified that this convoy was trying to enter their traditional territory at Brocket. I've been to Brocket. Brocket is definitely on Piikani First Nation territory.

To be clear, that's being printed in a newspaper, confirmed by the members inside the newspaper that they were part of that convoy, which I know the Piikani people, according to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, who's talked to the leadership, find troubling. Again, I will reiterate my suggestion yesterday that the members do apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. The Premier pointing

out that trying to go onto the Piikani land to try to trespass on that land without permission, which certainly would be trespassing on that land without permission if they had succeeded – the roadblock stopped them from entering that territory. Clearly, that is inappropriate, and that’s what the Premier was referring to.

Lastly, I will close with this. Trespassing can be a crime. I’m not an expert on the Criminal Code, but there would be different ways to use the term “trespassing.” I can tell you, for sure, Mr. Speaker, that if those members had entered Piikani territory without their permission as sitting members of the Legislature, it would have certainly been seen by the people of the Piikani as trespassing. Those members should apologize, no matter whether this is a point of order or not, to the Piikani First Nation.

The Speaker: It’s fairly unique for a House leader to provide a submission and then respond to a submission, so I’m reluctant. Perhaps there’s another member of your caucus that has new information to provide.

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. I want it to be very clear that the Speaker takes no position on the actions of the member. Whether they did or did not enter onto someone’s land with or without permission is not up to the Speaker to decide. If we all only ever used media reports to determine what happened or didn’t happen outside of this Chamber, I don’t think that we would want the Speaker to be using that as the only source to rule upon as well. Perhaps we can all agree to one thing today.

What I will say, with that in mind and with the Speaker taking no position on whether or not members did or did not trespass on First Nations land, is that I was clear yesterday with respect to making accusations that may be of criminal nature of another member of the Assembly. Now, I can accept that perhaps the Premier was unaware of that particular reminder and that he may not have heard that. As such, he would know that making accusations, broadly speaking, about the criminality of the intention of another member would be unparliamentary. I’ll invite the Government House Leader to withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I’m happy to withdraw on behalf of the Premier.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. It’s almost how it’s done. He did withdraw. I did not hear an apology, but I think that we have seen a number of those incidents today. I recognize that we are now at approximately day 114 of the current legislative session, and that is . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Day 116.

The Speaker: Day 116. Thank you.

. . . long, hard, and continuous. As we all know, sometimes decorum can decline towards the end of a session.

But I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that as we look forward to new hope and new opportunities that only a new legislative session can bring, folks will heed some of the rulings that the Speaker has made over the past session. I particularly encourage members of the opposition to look at the use of the language that they use that I have ruled upon with respect to mistruths, misleading the Assembly, not telling the truth, and every other possible opportunity under the sun to do indirectly what you can’t do directly, and then I encourage members of the government to take a look at some of the other cautions that I have provided them with respect to the language that they use, because at the heart of everything we do here is our endeavour to represent Albertans in the best way possible and ensure that the best policy is made for the

future of our province, and I know that every member has the desire to do that.

I consider these matters dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Committee Membership Changes

94. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon: Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly’s committees be replaced as follows:
- (a) on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing that Mr. Neudorf replace Mr. Barnes and Mr. Williams replace Mr. Rehn;
 - (b) on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Mr. Loewen replace Mr. Neudorf;
 - (c) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Mr. Rehn replace Mr. Loewen.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 21(3) this is a debatable motion. Do any members have additional questions, comments, debate that they would like to add to Government Motion 94?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 94 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, everyone. I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 58

Freedom to Care Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I believe the total time remaining on this is 39 minutes. Are there any members wishing to – oh, sorry. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has now caught my eye.

Member Loyola: Yeah. I can appreciate the – I started to gain some weight there, Mr. Chair. You should be able to see me a little bit easier than you did before. That’s for sure. Yeah. I’m trying to get back on the workout routine, especially after this COVID, you know? So many members from the community are telling me the same thing. It’s this COVID thing that led them to gain some weight.

Anyways, I’ll get to the point. We’re here discussing Bill 58, of course. This particular bill – now, before I address exactly what I want to speak to, I need to address the rhetoric coming from the other side. Somehow the members from the other side are interpreting our concern as somehow being against nonprofit organizations, and nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Chair. To the members on the other side of the House, I respectfully request that they revise their statements, because nobody on this side of the House is making that claim. Absolutely nobody.

3:00

What we are concerned about and as several of my colleagues have stated in the House time and time and time again is that those other than nonprofit organizations would then somehow take advantage of the particular situation, this particular piece of legislation, should it come to pass. You know, based on the track record of this government not taking into consideration any of the amendments from this side of House, we can expect it to pass as is, but regardless of that fact we will attempt to do our due diligence here as the opposition within this House and bring the concerns of community members, their voice, into this House.

It seems to be that the government is absolutely disconnected from this particular concern, among so many others, you know, and as I stated before in the House, Mr. Chair, it seems that they're blinded by their own ideology. It's fine to have an ideology, but you cannot refuse the practical applications of what you're suggesting in legislation, how it is going to truly impact the community, and, of course, how it's actually going to affect, in this particular case, the rest of the nonprofit organizations here in the province of Alberta.

We've asked a number of questions – a number of questions – regarding this particular bill, made a number of suggestions. It's with that in mind that I would like to introduce a new amendment, Mr. Chair, and I will await your direction before I continue.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, this will be referred to as amendment A6.

For all those members who wish to receive a copy, feel free to put up your hand. There will also, however, be copies at the tables by the entrances.

I will say that given the length it will be up to you. I'm perfectly happy if you read it into the record for everybody's benefit. It might actually be helpful for those at home. But, ultimately, if you decide to give us the intention behind it, then I would understand that, too. Beyond that – I'm assuming that you already have – please ensure that there's a copy sent to the table as well.

If the hon. member could please continue.

Member Loyola: Sure. Thank you very much. As is custom, I will read the amendment into the record. I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs that Bill 58, Freedom to Care Act, be amended in section 5 by (a) striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

- (2) A non-profit organization must
 - (a) in the form and manner as the Minister may direct and in accordance with clause (b), apply for an exemption, and
 - (b) specify in the application how the exemption
 - (i) would address a need of the non-profit organization in respect of a single event or activity,
 - (ii) relates to a charitable purpose of the non-profit organization, and
 - (iii) would not pose a risk to the health and safety of volunteers or the individuals receiving services from the non-profit organization.

And (b) by striking out subsection (3) and substituting the following:

- (3) An order for an exemption under this section must meet the following conditions:
 - (a) the Lieutenant Governor in Council may only make an order if it is satisfied that the exemption meets the criteria set out in subsection 2(b),
 - (b) the order may only be in respect of one non-profit organization, and

- (c) the order must set out
 - (i) the non-profit organization to which the exemption applies,
 - (ii) the specific event or activity subject to the exemption,
 - (iii) the specific provisions of the regulations that are disappplied in respect of the specific event or activity,
 - (iv) the specific charitable purpose of the non-profit organization to which the exemption relates, and
 - (v) the limited period of time for which the exemption applies.

Mr. Chair, when Bill 58 was introduced, the minister stated that the bill would grant one-time, short-term exemptions from government regulations intended for business. The bill in its current state does not put in any parameters to keep the expectations short term or limited to one time. The current parameters could allow for repeated exemptions, and as long as the period of time is listed, the exemptions could be for six months, a year, two years, or more. It's just not clear.

This amendment would require that the nonprofit that is applying must identify how the exemption would address the need of the organization through a single event or an activity, how it relates to the charitable purpose of the organization, and, of course, why it would not reduce the health and safety of volunteers or clients. Now, this is perhaps the most important aspect of this particular amendment.

Now, we get that these nonprofits want to provide this service, help out people in the community, but there always needs to be a balance, Mr. Chair. Through you to the other members, I would suggest that this is a balance that we need to take into consideration when contemplating this proposed piece of legislation before us. Of course, now, again I go back to the rhetoric on the other side. They're saying that, you know, if the NDP had their way, there would be another lockdown. This is so far from the truth, through you to the minister. The rhetoric is unacceptable. When we are attempting to just take into consideration the safety of Albertans and ministers from this government get up in this House and say that we want a lockdown, this is just unfathomable.

We're talking about the safety of Albertans. We never suggested a full lockdown. What we're talking about is keeping Albertans safe when it comes to this pandemic, and I really wish, Mr. Chair, through you to the minister, that they would stop with that particular rhetoric because it's getting tiresome. This is about an opportunity to debate the piece of legislation that we have before us. I'm trying to be very constructive by providing an amendment that it seems was the government's intent but is not reflected in the proposed piece of legislation. I would really request that members opposite get up and debate the point rather than exposing us to the rhetoric on their side. Let's debate, address the policy, address the piece of legislation that we have before us.

Furthermore, Mr. Chair, this particular amendment requires that the order (a) can only be given if the one above is fulfilled, (b) specifically the event or activity for which the exemption applies, specific to the limited period of time for the exemption and the activity.

3:10

This way, we can have a better understanding of: what is the intention of the nonprofit organization in providing the additional service that they wish to provide to the community? There could be a constant state of follow-up, right? If the nonprofit wants to continue, well, it would have to be a completely other event. But this way, at each event it could be actually measured. We could actually understand: "Okay. How did it go? How did the process

go? Is this further required?" We could better understand what the nonprofit is actually trying to provide the community and how to do it best. Then this way, we're making sure that Albertans are kept safe throughout as we, hopefully, get to the end of this pandemic, make it to the other side of this pandemic. Therefore, we're making sure that it's done in a reasonable and measured way.

With that, Mr. Chair, I conclude my remarks.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

With regard to amendment A6 I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for introducing this amendment on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I think this is an incredibly reasonable amendment that matches the intent of what the minister has said about this bill.

Now, through the debate I have struggled because the Official Opposition is talking about some very clear and specific things that Bill 58 does; specifically, granting the government the ability to exempt nonprofits from any regulations they want for as long as they want as well as to designate businesses or other entities as nonprofits, which then allows them to grant the regulation exemptions. The government has insisted that this is only about volunteers but ignored the very real loopholes and gaping problems in Bill 58 in how it's drafted and what it actually does.

I really, really want to point out that the government characterizes this as only for use in an emergency, but the legislation doesn't specify that. The government has characterized this as for short-term exemptions. The legislation doesn't govern that, doesn't say anything about that. The government has said that all of these exemptions will be posted on a website. This legislation doesn't do that. In fact, this legislation doesn't require any public disclosure of the exemptions granted at all. There is an annual report that goes to cabinet. The public doesn't get to see that.

There are giant, giant problems in Bill 58. When we talk about the need to limit Bill 58, then all of a sudden the minister of environment is standing up, and because section 3 has the title Limitations on Liability, he starts reading from it as if that somehow answers any of the questions we've been asking. It's completely unrelated and shows a complete lack of understanding of what Bill 58 does and how it interacts with the real world once it gets passed.

In this amendment that has just been moved, we are simply trying to put a few collars around Bill 58. We tried to do this with previous amendments. For example, if you're not intending to use this to reduce the care standards in continuing care, let's exempt the regulations so that this does not apply to those regulations. The government would not, which really raises questions and concerns about how Bill 58 is actually going to be used.

As we have identified, there is a real deficit in trust with this government, and they are literally asking for a blank cheque of freedom to exempt anyone from anything at any time and to trust that it will only be used for good and wholesome purposes, and anyone objecting to this must hate volunteers. That's ridiculous. It's disingenuous. It's an insult to the Albertans that we are here to debate on behalf of. We are raising legitimate concerns with this bill, as we have raised legitimate concerns with other bills that include overreach – I am thinking of Bill 10 – and instead of engaging in an actual debate and discussion about what this legislation does and how it can be improved, we get ministers reading to us from unrelated sections and telling Albertans that we hate volunteers. It has been very frustrating.

I want to say kudos to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who moved this

amendment in an attempt to improve this piece of legislation. I encourage all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Minister of Transportation and of Municipal Affairs has risen.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to address this amendment, just ever so recently put before this Legislature. It's apparently our opinion that part (a) is already covered by other legislation and that the qualifying part for the exemptions is covered by annual reporting. Also, in part (b), as we understand this, it limits it only to nonprofits, which would in some instances take out, really, the intent of the legislation. For example, it would limit the exemptions to nonprofits. I believe that in the example the Premier gave when he was speaking in the House, the example of during the floods, when the good people from the Hutterite colony provided sandwiches, they would perhaps be considered a corporation, and they wouldn't have been able to provide those sandwiches. So the limitations put here – there's one example where it wouldn't be the protection that we seek for people to provide that freedom to care.

Mr. Chair, I will say – I only raise this because the mover of the amendment raised it – that the reason we talked about the NDP wanting to add restrictions almost like a lockdown is because they've stood in this House day after day after day and said things that suggest that that's what they would prefer. If they perhaps don't want that to be repeated, they perhaps shouldn't have said it here repeatedly in the first place.

However, getting back to the motion, it's interesting. I won't say that it's poorly intended, but I will say that if the NDP was sincere about having this carefully considered by the government, they probably would have shown it to the government before now. It's dated June 1, 2021, so they've obviously had it prepared for over two weeks and chose not to share it with the government. I'm not saying that they're insincere, but I will say that they didn't make all the efforts that they might have to have the government carefully consider this. We won't be supporting it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has risen.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this amendment. I think it's worth first going over what this bill does. It is a bill that enables the government to exempt any organization from any regulation. This includes, as we tried to amend last night, occupational health and safety, employment standards, the requirement to feed and provide sufficient water for residents of long-term care. So it's a concern. We have made multiple legitimate attempts to amend it, and this is one of them.

This is one that would require the nonprofit applying to identify how the exemption would address the need of an organization through a single activity or event or how it relates to a charitable purpose. I mean, that doesn't strike me as exceptionally onerous. Even the Deputy Government House Leader rose and said: well, this might limit it to not-for-profits. Well, yeah, the idea here is to limit it to instances in which a charitable purpose can be demonstrated or to a small, limited exemption, which is what the government claims this bill is about.

I think, you know, that the debate on this bill has wandered far afield. As we're having this debate, it takes me back to a moment in my first year of law school and one of the lawyers that were called in to sort of tell us all about what the profession was like and what we might want to do in our professional careers. His words

have stuck with me to this day. He said: you will have many, many clients; you will have only one reputation. I would urge members on the government side to consider this because it is as true in politics as it is in law: you have only one reputation.

The willingness of government members to stand and speak about these amendments as if they do completely other things than what they do, to speak as though they haven't read the legislation – Mr. Chair, I can't comment on whether they've read the legislation or not, but their comments demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of said legislation, so either they've read it and they made the comments anyway, or they simply haven't bothered to read it.

3:20

Mr. Chair, it's troubling, and I think it is the source of a lot of the debate in this House. This is a very short bill. The text that provides the government with the ability to name literally anything in the province a not-for-profit for literally any reason is right in the bill. The text that allows them to provide an exemption to literally any regulation is right in the bill. You know, they keep accusing us of making it up, but Albertans have the ability to go and read the legislation for themselves. We in this place are all members of parties – well, not all of us anymore, actually. I apologize for that. You know, we owe a certain duty of loyalty to that, but we also owe a certain duty of loyalty to Albertans, and I think it's worth considering that duty of loyalty to Albertans. I think that that duty to Albertans and to our constituents includes a duty to correctly state the things that are in the legislation that are under debate and not to pretend that it's about something that it isn't.

The government has the ability to attempt to sell their legislation as anything they want to. That's fine. They get to title it. They get to write a preamble. They get to write communications messages about it. Those may not be entirely accurate, but that's fine. Then when we come to this House and we propose amendments, amendments to legislation that is there in black and white, amendments which are themselves there in black and white, for the government to stand and say, "Oh, no; what you really mean is," that is just disingenuous. It's really, really troubling. It doesn't require a law degree to read the amendment and to read the legislation and to determine what they do. We have proposed a lot of amendments, amendments aimed to limit the scope of the exemptions that the government is able to grant, and they have rejected them all out of hand. I think that is certainly suggestive of whether or not this legislation, in fact, supports the stated goals that the government has given for the legislation.

We are not against volunteers. We support volunteers. We support charitable organizations in being able to do their work.

Ms Hoffman: We are volunteers.

Ms Ganley: We are volunteers.

We don't think that it's unreasonable to put some limits so that the government cannot sneak in, by way of saying, "Here are some exemptions for volunteers and not-for-profit organizations," a bunch of exemptions for corporations to things like the requirement to make sure that when you're bathing a senior, the temperature of the water is appropriate, to things like requiring that you provide sufficient food and water for residents of long-term care. These are not unreasonable limitations on that power, and I'm really, really troubled that the government is rejecting them.

I hope that in this case the government will give due consideration to this amendment, though history, I'm afraid, would not support that hope on my part.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to join on A6?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:25 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Hoffman
Dach	Gray	Loyola
Feehan		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rowswell
Allard	Issik	Sawhney
Amery	LaGrange	Schow
Copping	Luan	Singh
Fir	Madu	Stephan
Getson	McIver	Toor
Glasgo	Neudorf	Turton
Glubish	Orr	Walker
Goodridge	Panda	Williams
Guthrie	Pon	Wilson
Hanson	Rosin	Yao
Horner		

Totals: For – 7 Against – 34

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Deputy Chair: I will now, of course, take this opportunity pursuant to Government Motion 92, agreed to earlier, which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be put to conclude Committee of the Whole consideration of Bill 58, Freedom to Care Act, to put the following questions to conclude debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 58 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Rowswell
Allard	Issik	Sawhney
Amery	LaGrange	Schow
Copping	Luan	Singh
Fir	Madu	Stephan
Getson	Nally	Toor
Glasgo	Neudorf	Turton
Glubish	Orr	Walker
Goodridge	Panda	Williams
Guthrie	Pon	Wilson
Hanson	Rosin	Yao
Horner		

Against the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Hoffman
Dach	Gray	Loyola
Feehan		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 7

[The remaining clauses of Bill 58 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed? All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chair: That is carried.

Mr. Nally: Sorry; I apologize, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: No worries.

Mr. Nally: It was time allocated, so I didn't think we were – I make a motion that the committee rise and report Bill 58.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has risen.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 58. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. That is carried and so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 58

Freedom to Care Act

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity has risen.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise on behalf of the Minister for Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to move third reading of Bill 58, Freedom to Care Act.

Mr. Speaker, this past year has been an exceptional one for everybody, and we have seen this incredible power of our nonprofit organizations. They continue to rise to the challenge, serve Albertans, and respond to community needs. Nonprofits are at their best when they are agile and can rely on their community relationships. In times of crisis and emergency local nonprofit organizations and their volunteers are well positioned to respond to the needs of community members facing hardship, including providing core necessities such as food and shelter.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 58 is an important piece of legislation to help nonprofits navigate regulatory barriers so that they can focus on delivering the essential programs and services that our communities need. As we all know, government regulations intended for

businesses are not always best suited to regulate nonprofit organizations. These regulations, meant primarily for business, often have existing exemptions nonprofits can access because of the unique nature of their work. There are several pieces of legislation that have exceptions specific to charitable and nonprofit groups and many more that provide exemptions more broadly. However, there is no mechanism to grant a one-time reasonable exemption, if needed, to support providing programs and services to the benefit of the community. In cases where an exemption does not already exist, Bill 58 would allow cabinet through an order in council to grant nonprofits one-time, short-term exemptions to some government regulations.

During the bill's debate some members claimed that the ability of cabinet to grant exemptions will be too broad, putting the health and safety of Albertans at risk. This is false. An exemption can only be requested from a specific regulation that is primarily intended for commercial activity in which an exemption does not already exist. The exemption can only be for a specific nonprofit organization and for a specific period of time. We recognize that nonprofits provide a wide range of programs and services to support the community. We do not intend to narrow that scope through legislation. Under the Freedom to Care Act such nonprofits would be defined as those with a charitable purpose, operating primarily for public benefit.

I also want to emphasize that Bill 58 would not compel the government to provide an exemption upon request. Each request for an exemption will be reviewed and carefully weighed for the benefits and risks during decision-making. If a request for an exemption is inappropriate, it would not proceed to cabinet as a result of the screening process or cabinet may deny the request. It's also important to note that cabinet will not have the authority to grant exemptions to statutes. If statutory changes are identified or requested by stakeholders, these would proceed within existing policy development and approval processes. They would continue to require cabinet approval and passage by the Legislative Assembly.

4:10

Through the course of the debate of Bill 58 some members opposite claimed that exemptions would be granted in secret. This is false. Any exemption that is granted would be approved by cabinet through order in council, which are public and published by the Queen's Printer. The act would also require the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women to report to cabinet annually on exemption requests. This will help ensure that legislation is applied consistently across government. The mandated reporting will also add an element of accountability to ensure that ministries that receive exemption requests consider granting them. Mr. Speaker, several pieces of legislation already contain exemptions specific to nonprofits, so one-time exemptions granted through cabinet are expected to be rare.

When we engaged with the nonprofit sector in the development of Bill 58, they instead identified the need for assistance to identify and navigate existing exemptions to regulations. This is why we are developing a website to help nonprofits access information about all existing exemptions. This website would also include a form for organizations to request assistance with accessing an existing exemption or requesting a new exemption. When the need for a new one-time common-sense exemption is identified, Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women will direct the application to the appropriate ministry. That ministry will then review the request. If the request is deemed appropriate, that ministry will lead the development of the recommendation for order in council. Launch of the central website is targeted for September 21.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's 1.6 million volunteers are essential to the province's 26,400 nonprofit organizations providing services to Albertans. Bill 58 would also provide individual volunteers with liability protections. This legislation will also provide individual volunteers with liability protections to encourage more Albertans to help their neighbours and in turn serve their community. This legislation would ensure that an individual volunteer who performs services for a nonprofit organization or the Crown, in other words the government, cannot be held personally liable for damages or harm. This would apply as long as the harm was not caused by wilful or criminal misconduct or when the volunteer was operating a motor vehicle. The volunteer must also be acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities and must be properly licensed, certified, or authorized.

I want to clarify that this would include professionals such as lawyers volunteering their services on behalf of a nonprofit. As long as they have their professional licence or registration, the protection of their trade would apply as well as the volunteer liability protections in the legislation. The volunteer liability protections would also include directors, officers, or trustee positions who are not provided compensation apart from reasonable reimbursement for expenses.

To be clear, even without the Freedom to Care Act nonprofit organizations could be found liable for the actions of their volunteers. Bill 58 would not change that. It would simply protect volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's nonprofits and our volunteers have helped us make it through the most difficult time in our province's history. Through flooding, fires, and the COVID-19 pandemic they have been there for Albertans. Generosity is the Albertan way, and the Freedom to Care Act would make it easier for nonprofit organizations to help their neighbours while giving Albertans more peace of mind to step forward as volunteers and serve their community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking all members of the House for their support of Bill 58, the Freedom to Care Act. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. associate minister.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 58 again. It has been a long debate on this. I think that since a staggering proportion of that debate has been directed at debating the facts before this Assembly, that is a good place to start.

There are a couple of sections – and this is a very short bill. I'm not by any means going to read the entire thing, but it's quite easy for members of the public who are confused to go and read the entire thing, and I would urge them to do so because the government statements with respect to this act have been inaccurate at best.

I think the first section worth reading is in the definitions section. Section 1 is the definitions section in this act. Section 1(g) is relevant in this, and it says what not-for-profit organization means. This is the interesting thing because throughout the rest of the legislation they'll refer to not-for-profit, and, you know, a person reading it could easily be confused into thinking that means only not-for-profits. But, of course, not-for-profit is specifically defined in the legislation, and it is defined to include: "(ii) an entity designated as a non-profit organization by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the regulations." What does that mean? Well, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is cabinet, so what it means is that in this act the term "not-for-profit" includes literally anything that cabinet designates. So even though the members opposite may wax

philosophical about how this only applies to not-for-profits, when they say not-for-profit, what they mean is literally anything that cabinet has decided to include.

Now, the minister and other ministers have stood up and said: "Well, don't worry about that. You don't need to worry about that. Trust us." Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's just the opposition that's skeptical about trusting this government. In fact, they have been voted the least transparent government in the country. There are a significant number of people – I would say a majority of this province – who are in a position of not trusting this government. That's not because Albertans are particularly untrustful people; it's because this government has demonstrated through a repeated course of conduct over and over and over again that they are not to be trusted.

Albertans who feel that way are to be respected because this government – I mean, we've gone so far that the Premier has actually said that this is a government that needs to earn back the trust of Albertans, and then immediately after saying that, has gone on to do nothing of the sort, has gone on to do precisely the opposite. To name simply an example from today, when asked about his niqab ban, he said first: "Oh, no. I never said that; I never did that; I never supported that." Then today he stood up and said: "Oh, I did say that. I did support it, and I defend it. It was the right thing to do." I mean, that's a dizzying turnaround in under 24 hours. Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans are to be forgiven for having some questions about whether the government will only designate appropriate organizations.

The next section of the bill that I think it's important to get clear on the record is section 5, which deals with exemption from regulations. Essentially what it says is:

notwithstanding . . .

the language in these things is sometimes not that transparent . . . any other enactment to the contrary, and subject to subsections (2) and (3), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by order, exempt a [not-for-profit] organization from the application of any regulations made under any other Act other than regulations that solely apply to [not-for-profits].

What does that say? Well, it says that cabinet can exempt any not-for-profit, and bear in mind, as we've just gone through, that not-for-profit means any organization designated by cabinet, so cabinet can pick any old corporation out there. They can pick Walmart or Starbucks or whatever they want, designate it as a not-for-profit, and then proceed to exempt it from literally any regulation, except those meant to apply specifically to not-for-profits, which of course wouldn't apply in this instance because it's a corporation that's been designated as a nonprofit.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear before the Assembly, the facts of what this bill does. Now, the government has risen over and over again and said: "Trust us. Don't worry. We're not going to do anything of the sort." So the opposition has done what we do, and we have tried to hold this government true to its word. We have introduced multiple amendments to try to make it the case that the government's legislation does what the government says it's going to do, and the government has rejected every single one of those amendments.

We've tried to amend it so that they couldn't designate anything that they wanted. They rejected that. We tried to amend it to ensure that there were certain regulations that these corporations, not-for-profits, whatever the cabinet decides to designate, are not in fact able to be exempted from. One set that we tried was the Employment Standards Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Code. The Occupational Health and Safety Code is pretty

important for volunteers, too. I've done a lot of community theatre work in my background, and, you know, it's important that you have rules around people building a set, that sort of thing. It's important that you have proper safety rules in place. It's not, I think, unreasonable to ensure that those are there.

Now, arguably, there's a case to be made, you know, in the case of a voluntary organization, that maybe some provision of some of those acts somewhere – but that's not what's happening here. What's happening here is that the government has given themselves the ability to designate a corporation, so, yes, we think that the Walmarts of the world should continue to be held to the Occupational Health and Safety Code and should continue to be held to the Employment Standards Code. I think that a series of amendments that would have done that but were rejected is really, really troubling.

Then, Mr. Speaker, it's worth going on to the amendment that I think is arguably the most troubling that the government rejected. That was to ensure that one of the regulations that these companies that the Lieutenant Governor in Council is designating can't be exempted from are several acts that essentially put in place minimum standards for long-term care homes.

Some of these standards – I have of course gone through and looked at them, and I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition expanded upon this at great length last night, much to the laughter and denial of the government side, which I thought was very sad. One of the regulations that we wanted to ensure that the government couldn't exempt folks from was the requirement to account for residents on a daily basis, so once in a 24-hour period to make sure that the residents of a long-term care home were all accounted for and well. I mean, that doesn't strike me as especially onerous, and it certainly doesn't strike me as something that a for-profit corporation should be able to seek an exemption from.

Another one of these regulations – and I'm naming only a few. There are many. People can go and look them up for themselves. Another such regulation is the requirement to ensure that there is adequate food and water to meet the nutritional and hydration needs of the residents of a long-term care home. I mean, I don't know; I think that's pretty important. The hydration needs? I mean, this is something that could have damaging and permanently damaging impact on someone's health in very little time. So, yes, I think that this is a regulation that people should not be able to apply for an exemption from. I mean, I'm really surprised that the government didn't accept that.

Another one of the regulations that would be under this same area includes the requirement that water be of an appropriate temperature. As was outlined by the Leader of the Official Opposition last night, these regulations didn't come out of nowhere. There was at least one very, very tragic incident where a senior was bathed in scalding water and died as a result of that incident. So these regulations don't exist for no reason. They're not red tape. They're in place to protect the lives and the health of those who can't necessarily advocate for themselves. I think that Alberta seniors deserve better. I think that they deserve better than a government who thinks that they should laugh off a regulation like that. It's important. That's another one of the amendments that we proposed that was rejected.

In addition, we proposed an amendment that would require that the not-for-profit applying must identify how the exemption would address the needs of the organization through a single event or activity, how it relates to the charitable purpose of the organization, and why it would not reduce the health and safety of volunteers and clients. I mean, that's not even as broad as the last two. That's a very narrow requirement. When the organization is applying, they need to explain how that helps to address the need of the

organization, how it relates to a charitable purpose, and why it wouldn't reduce the health or safety of volunteers or clients. That's not a particularly onerous requirement. If you're going to be granted an exemption from a regulation, having to identify the reason why that exemption is being granted seems fairly reasonable to me. I haven't heard anyone from the government side stand up and explain why that isn't reasonable, and that is also incredibly troubling to me.

Mr. Speaker, all of these exemptions, all of which would have made the legislation do what the government claims it does, were rejected. The government has stood up and stated: "Well, not to worry. We don't need to be penned in by legislation; just trust us. We'll carefully weigh the benefits and risks." This is a government that carefully weighed the benefits and risks of gambling \$1.3 billion of Albertans' money on Donald Trump winning the White House, and they lost. They lost not with their own money; with all of our money. So their careful weighing of the risks and benefits I don't think rises to the normal standard that an Albertan would expect of the careful weighing of risks and benefits. To me, there's nothing careful about that. It was entirely politically motivated. It had absolutely nothing to do with the benefit of Albertans.

Again, we come back to this situation where the government is saying: "We, the government, want to impose rules on all of you to make sure that you hold yourselves to minimum standards, but we don't want any such rules applied to us. We don't think that we should have rules applied to us that will require us to be held to reasonable standards. Just trust us. Just trust us." I mean, imagine if Albertans went around saying: "Oh, we don't need laws; just trust us. We won't do anything wrong." This is an absurd position, yet here we are.

I think that this bill is incredibly troubling, and what troubles me most is the suggestion that these very reasonable limits, these very reasonable amendments, which I have just outlined, the government tries to play off as us hating volunteers. I mean, that's ridiculous. I myself have volunteered fairly continuously since about the age of 10. I started by assisting with children's day camp. I have coached synchronized swimming. I have taught swimming lessons. I have volunteered at community theatre, been a stage manager. I've provided free legal advice to Albertans. There's no end to – like, that's decades of volunteer service. So this definitely isn't about hating volunteers. In fact, I think that every single one of my colleagues could probably stand up and say the same. This is not about us disliking volunteers; this is about us wanting the government to have reasonable limits on their powers to exempt anyone they want from any rule. That doesn't seem at all unreasonable to me. You know, the government has admitted that they have the ability, in fact, in the minister's speech, to designate any entity, but they've also said that it's one-time and short-term, except the problem with that is that we have only their word. It is not in the legislation. All we are asking is that if that is the truth, if they really intend it only to be one-time and short-term, they put that in the legislation.

4:30

If that is their intention, why are they so resistant to putting that in the legislation? This is what confuses me. They resist any call to put any limit on their powers under this legislation, but then they say: "Don't worry; don't worry. You have to grant us the power; we just won't use it." Well, why do you need it, then? It defies all logic.

The minister also said: oh, don't worry; these things will be published by the Queen's Printer because they are published by the Queen's Printer. Well, that's normally true, but we actually just saw an instance in which the government has had to go back, in Bill 66,

and retroactively validate their orders from the chief medical officer of health because they didn't do that. They didn't file the regulations with the registrar, they didn't publish them in the *Gazette*, nor did they publish the required order to say that they weren't required to file those with the registrar. That's the concern. You know, they tell us, "Well, don't worry; this is how the process works," except that they don't apply the process to themselves.

The other thing that's worth noting – and it comes up again because the minister has mentioned and, in fact, explicitly mentioned, perhaps even in reference to a question that I asked at an earlier stage with respect to the limitations on liability, that it would in fact apply to a lawyer acting in their professional capacity. The minister stated it as though this was a good thing. The reason I asked whether it applied to a lawyer in their professional capacity is because that is not a good thing. It's a concerning thing.

What it means is that a lawyer – you could go to a volunteer lawyer at a volunteer organization, and there are lots of these. Calgary Legal Guidance springs to mind; I worked there before I was elected, again, as a volunteer, not as an employee. Exempting those lawyers from professional liability suggests that in the instance that they're volunteering their time, they aren't required to act with reasonable care and attention, with reasonable diligence. Well, I mean, that undercuts the entire capacity of the pro bono sector of the legal services because what it means is that if you go to a lawyer and that lawyer is volunteering their time, if you go to a lawyer and that lawyer isn't being paid, they aren't required to give you proper advice. I mean, that's a huge concern. Albertans should be able to rely on the advice of their lawyers regardless of whether that advice is for free because it essentially renders that free legal advice completely worthless. You can't rely on it because the lawyer will not be held to proper standards of professional conduct.

The incredible concern here is that this applies to other professions. For instance, it potentially applies to a psychologist engaged in a practice that falls below the normal standards, something like, say, conversion therapy. That's a pretty big concern. Professionals, I guess my point is, should be held to professional standards regardless of whether they are volunteering their time. I don't think that that's unreasonable. Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, regardless of whether they're volunteering their time – if they are acting in their professional capacity, people should be able to rely on the advice that they receive because otherwise it's entirely worthless.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Standing Order 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: That was the second speaker, if you'd like to join debate.

I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo caught my eye.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join debate and follow kind of where my colleague left off. I, too, am not going to support the bill before us for numerous reasons. You know, when I was listening to the original presentation or the introduction of one of the readings by the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, I was reflecting back on the example that she provided for the reason for this bill. I'm not going to quote her verbatim, but I think that the gist of it was that there was – I think she said that it was during the flood, during an emergency. A group of women wanted to help out those impacted by the emergency of the flood, and they made up a bunch of sandwiches, and they

brought them to wherever people were who had taken refuge from that emergency.

They were prohibited from handing out their sandwiches, you know, which they had taken time and effort to prepare for others, genuinely moved to help out people who were in a very traumatic situation, potentially losing their homes or being impacted, certainly being out of their homes. They were prohibited from doing that because of regulations, red tape – well, no; I'll say regulations, not red tape – needing to ensure that that food was properly prepared. Now, I think that that is a tragedy. I think people who – I understand why the regulations are there, but I think there can be some latitude, of course, and cooler heads maybe could have found a way to make that happen, but that was the example that the minister provided in support of this bill called Freedom to Care Act.

Frankly, when you think of that, when you think of the timing involved in this bill and that action from – and it didn't even sound like it was a nonprofit group. It sounded like it was a collection of well-meaning people. They don't qualify for potentially being a nonprofit organization or – you know, they certainly were being charitable, but they weren't registered for that sort of thing. They weren't a society incorporated to do that from my recollection of what she was saying.

But we hear from the associate minister and the minister at the time that there are a number of hoops in that situation where this group of people would have had to get exemptions from a number of things. They would have had to talk to the minister, it looks like in this bill. The minister would have referred it to the bureaucracy: give us some advice on whether we should provide an exemption. It would have to go to cabinet, and then it would have to go to the Lieutenant Governor for an order in council. That's what I get from reviewing that, and if I'm wrong, somebody can tell me. How does that fit, Mr. Speaker, with a group of people making up some sandwiches and this bill giving them the freedom to care, to provide those sandwiches to those people? It doesn't.

4:40

The times don't work. It's preposterous to think that anything in government can happen that quickly when people show up at a shelter with a plate of sandwiches or hundreds of sandwiches and want to give them out. Her example doesn't make any sense to me. Maybe there are some examples that would make sense, but that one, how she introduced this bill, makes no sense at all. That's the first thing I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that I really don't get how it's going to benefit some people who want to do their best, show up, help out, and where this bill would kick in.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now, in that situation, Mr. Speaker, I really don't know why a group would go to the minister. Why wouldn't they go to their local elected official, member of council, the mayor and say, "Look; we've got a problem; let's sort it out"? Why would they come to the province for that? It doesn't make sense to me.

A word my colleagues have used to address this bill is overreach, because when I think of the needs of nonprofits at this time, of charitable organizations at this time, it's not this bill, Mr. Speaker. What they really, really need at this time – and this was spoken to last night by the Official Opposition leader – is a government who will support them through COVID. Their fundraising has been negatively affected. We know that there'll be many organizations that don't make it through COVID because their usual way of sustaining themselves has been impacted. Casinos are one good example. When they're shut down, you know, there's not money to hand out through the lottery board, as there was before COVID.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

What organizations need – nonprofit organizations, charitable organizations – is government to have their backs through grant dollars. They need the ability to apply for grants more regularly instead of – under gaming regulations now it's getting further and further apart, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months between casinos, which makes it extremely hard to count on those monies when it's two and a half years out. They need more streamlined regulation processes. None of that's in this bill, but that's what they need. I wonder who in government, who in cabinet was talking to organizations out there when what I've heard from nonprofits is: we're struggling to stay alive. It's not the exemption from doing good works that they need help with.

On that point, you know, like my colleague, who can go back to when she was 10 years old, volunteering, did you say? – and we know she just had a birthday, so she's been volunteering for 33 years, Mr. Speaker. No small amount of time, a third of a century – I'm making you sound older and older – she's been volunteering.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I've been volunteering, too, Mr. Speaker, a lot longer than the young MLA for Calgary-Mountain View has. The volunteering that I've been doing is on boards and organizations, and on all of those organizations one of the first things new volunteers do – or when a new board is compiled, one of the first things that board does is that they talk about board volunteer insurance to understand what protection they have as a board member, as a volunteer to a board. I can say that on every board that I've been on, we have had insurance. That's what agencies do to protect their volunteers. I've been on some boards where there have been actions taken against boards, and the insurance is there to hire lawyers, to defend the board in its actions. There are avenues, there are ways that volunteers are protected already, and it's through the purchasing of insurance to make that happen.

You know, I look at the number of amendments, and I think we're up to 10, Mr. Speaker. This is a relatively small – well, it's only eight pages. I think it's eight pages. Seven. Ten amendments for seven pages. I think back to the six years I've been here. I can't remember a small bill, a short bill like this having that many amendments. I think that it's not like we haven't tried to make this a better bill. We've given time and effort and debated at many stages the amendments that have come before this House to try and improve things for the benefit – because we know that government is going to push this through, but we've tried to be reasonable in bringing up the number of concerns we presented.

I have concerns, of course, like my colleagues, with the item under (g)(ii), “an entity designated as a non-profit organization by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the regulations.” It seems to – as my Official Opposition leader said yesterday, she thought that instead of being called the Freedom to Care Act, this should be called the Freedom to Drive an 18-Wheeler Truck through Even More Loopholes Act. I think it's her way of saying that there's a lot that can be designated as a nonprofit organization if this cabinet wishes it to be so. That's a concern that we put forward and tried to address, and subsequently we were turned down, unfortunately.

Also, in talking about the regulation, the regulation-forming power seems too broad in part 3, the general part here, Mr. Speaker. I just think that the nonprofits in this province – and we heard the associate minister talk about the hundreds of thousands, I think he said – are doing their darndest to ensure that they address the many needs Albertans have. Albertans can be commended for forming nonprofits, where volunteers get together for no other reason than

to want to help out their fellow Albertans in any manner of sector or interest.

That should be celebrated and rewarded but not with the kind of confusion that's in this bill, Mr. Speaker, like the confusion that I suffered when the minister talked about, you know, having a plate of sandwiches and being stymied to hand those out. For the life of me, I don't see how the Freedom to Care Act can help those well-meaning people who want to give out sandwiches. They would have to come to the province and work through the system that is being set up with this bill. Why wouldn't they kind of go directly to the shelter manager, to the civic officials, to the people who know people in the city or town where this issue was had?

Thank you.

4:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've always had great pleasure listening to the member speak about every matter he rises to talk about in the Legislature, and this is no exception. The Freedom to Care Act is something that all of us on this side of the House really see as an emblematic piece of legislation that reveals a lot about the government side, especially in terms of how it strategizes to put things into legislation that are under cover of so-called good Samaritan elements of the legislation.

I'm just wondering if the member might want to talk a little bit about the issue that I brought up just now about whether or not the insertion of the elements that we would describe as intentional loopholes were actually that, or would he, in his view, consider them to be simply careless errors? I'm not really sure. I haven't made up my mind about that. Either way, Mr. Speaker, it behooves me to wonder out loud in this House once again why such a thing would occur in legislation, why the government would make such careless errors and not catch them, or, if indeed this was an intentional loophole, why they need to sugar-coat it with a good Samaritan argument.

If the member would care to offer his comments on what motivation he thinks lies behind the coupling of the two elements of this legislation, I'd be happy to hear it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo to respond.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for reminding me about that. When the House leader yesterday talked about the good Samaritan act, I was confused. He was comparing this to that. The Freedom to Care Act is not the good Samaritan act. The good Samaritan act has to do with liabilities around helping somebody out in medical distress, I think. How is that connected to exemptions for volunteers who want to do charitable purposes? I think the whole thing around the good Samaritan was to try and, you know, jolly the opposition and say: “Look, everybody supports the good Samaritan act. It's all over. It's universal. Get onboard. We want to bring this bill in.” I don't even know if this bill has similar kinds of legislation in other jurisdictions.

When we were government, we used to do cross-jurisdictional analyses and have a whole list of, you know, “We're looking at this statute or this bill; let's find out what other provinces, what other governments, what other countries have done” and then review it – right? – to see where yours was good, bad, and different that you were proposing.

No one on this side brought up the good Samaritan act because we know it's a totally different direction. It's a totally different reason for protection of a person who intervenes. I hope to God I'm

never the patient in that situation, but I'll be glad if somebody acts on the good Samaritan act if I ever need it, and I would do the same thing. I think it's a human thing to do. But it's not about a nonprofit group bringing sandwiches to a shelter. That's not the good Samaritan act. The House leader bringing it up is, frankly, offensive when we're dealing with something – and frankly I don't know why the minister brought up her example. It wouldn't be helped by this.

What we really need from the government, my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, is for the government to be a lot clearer around who's going to benefit from this bill before us. I want to thank you for your question.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are approximately five seconds left in Standing Order 29(2)(a).

On the main bill the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

Time Allocation on Bill 58

93. Mr. Nally moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 58, Freedom to Care Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Government Motion 93 is debatable pursuant to Standing Order 21(3). The Official Opposition has up to five minutes to respond. The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak strongly against the use of Government Motion 93 to curtail debate on a piece of legislation that, in only two speakers at third reading, I've already heard such significant and major concerns about this piece of legislation that I know that this government should be spending more time trying to understand these concerns and address them versus shutting down debate.

Now, I do need to put on the record that this is one of 29 motions of time allocation that this Government House Leader has used throughout this session. In one session: 29 times. I will say that in our four years in government time allocation motions were just introduced five times. A shocking difference between the two governments and their approach to democracy and their approach to how we manage the debate in this House.

I know the Government House Leader referred to our raising concerns on Bill 58 as filibustering volunteers, which is a ridiculous claim because we're trying very hard to communicate to this government that they have written a piece of legislation without any appropriate limits or curtailment or oversight. Although the government continues to debate us about their intentions on this legislation, the actual reading of the legislation and how it can be used is incredibly, to borrow a word from a colleague whom I respect very much, problematic.

But more so than the problems within Bill 58, which is what this government is choosing to curtail debate on, is their use of time allocation repeatedly in this place and the impact that that has on the business of this House as well as our responsibility to Albertans to be able to serve them in ensuring that there is robust debate on all pieces of legislation.

Now, I do want to perhaps quote from a member's statement that my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning delivered today because I felt like it was right on topic. She gave a member's statement that she entitled No Democracy in Here, and she mentioned the 29 times that this government has moved to close debate, shutting out constituents from being represented in the Chamber versus the NDP record from the previous government. As well, she went on to speak to how often this government speaks kind words and pays tribute to democracy, yet we've seen so many steps taken to undermine it that it creates cognitive dissonance. It's hard to match one with the other.

5:00

Everything from grassroot members of his party feeling unheard and what we've certainly seen out of all of the most recent polling of Albertans, the lack of trust for this government, to the RCMP investigations that have been in part, to the Election Commissioner who was removed at one point, to handing out earplugs: each of these pieces were pieces written in the member's statement by the Member for Edmonton-Manning. I think that they paint a pretty clear picture of the style of governance of this UCP government and the way that they have continued to push their agenda during a pandemic without bringing into this House support for jobs, without bringing into this House respect for Albertans and the trust that Albertans place in their government.

Now here we are in the final days of this session, and the government curtails debate on a bill that quite literally allows the government to exempt organizations from health and safety regulations, from regulations designed to protect seniors. So I do not support the time allocation motion, Government Motion 93, that has been brought forward. I believe strongly that this is a tool that should be used infrequently, yet we see the government use it time after time after time.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 93 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:02 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rosin
Allard	Horner	Rowswell
Amery	Hunter	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Issik	Schow
Copping	LaGrange	Singh
Fir	Luan	Stephan
Getson	Nally	Toor
Glasgo	Neudorf	Turton
Glubish	Orr	Walker
Goodridge	Panda	Williams
Gotfried	Pon	Yao
Guthrie		

5:20

Against the motion:

Ceci	Ganley	Hoffman
Dach	Gray	Loyola
Feehan		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 7

[Government Motion 93 carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading

Bill 58
Freedom to Care Act
(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I probably shouldn't be shocked that the government continues to try to stifle debate, but here we are again. I'll try to use my time as thoughtfully as possible.

I want to say that I personally – and I've talked to some members opposite and certainly members in this caucus – love it any time I can reference *Seinfeld* in the House, and today appears to be one of those days. It was the Premier's remarks last night, when he talked about the good Samaritan act, that really highlighted the difference between what that act was intended to be and what this bill we're here considering is. Of course, it made me think of the *Seinfeld* series finale. Definitely, this legislation is very different from what those characters were experiencing. Obviously, they were in a situation where they were supposed to help somebody who was in harm's way, and they didn't, and they were held accountable for that. The interesting thing is that that did actually make me think about what this bill might actually be about.

The couple of examples that have been given as the impetus I think are lovely narratives and anecdotes, but I don't think, as my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo pointed out, that they reflect the reality of what this bill is actually doing, giving examples about well-intended citizens wanting to help out and then writing legislation that talks about things like “an entity designated as a non-profit organization by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the regulations” – so changing nonprofit status – and going on to say “designating an organization as a non-profit organization for the purposes of this Act.”

Like, in what realistic situation when you're responding to a disaster, which has been used as the example – right? – the flood being the big example that both the Premier and the minister mentioned many times, are you going to the minister, who then goes to cabinet, who then takes it to the Lieutenant Governor to say, “Please let these women share their sandwiches”? For a government that says that they don't want to bog people down with bureaucracy and red tape, they're finding creative ways to create it rather than finding solutions to actually address an immediate concern in a time of crisis. That's the first thing I want to say about that.

The second is that the government has given examples about extreme circumstances, times of disaster, people stepping forward. The bill doesn't require any of that, right? Like, the bill is written in a very open-ended way. Then the government goes on to say: “Well, it will be time definite. There will be a period of time that this is in place. It won't be indefinite.” Again, the bill doesn't say that.

With many regulations, their impetus is because something horrific happened in the past – somebody was hurt, was injured, somebody died – and government needed to step up and do what we could as stewards of the law, stewards of the community, of safety, of well-being to create some safeguards. So when we look at examples of potentially eliminating those safeguards – which is what this bill absolutely does. It creates so many opportunities for every regulation to be waived through order in council, which is just so short sighted and – I don't want to say unconscionable. I feel like that gets really overused, but I think giving government the

extreme power to be able to overturn rules that were put in place to keep people safe is irresponsible. Let's go with that. It's irresponsible, and it's selfish, and I think it is not reflecting what the government keeps saying the intended purpose of this bill is.

I want to reiterate that we are volunteers, we care about volunteers, we work with volunteers, and when I think about – my favourite volunteer is probably my mom. She volunteers, obviously, to help us but also to help so many others in the community. When I think about all of the various things she does to help take care of others, I think it is fair for her to assume that she will be taken care of when she is also caring for others. Government has given themselves the ability to take away that safeguard and those protections.

My colleague from Calgary-Buffalo talked about insurance for folks who serve on boards, also insurance for folks who are volunteering and acquire an injury when they're at a place where volunteering is in place. Why is the government giving themselves the ability to take that protection away? When I think about . . .

Mr. Hunter: That's not true. It's not true.

Ms Hoffman: Well, the government is giving itself the ability through this bill, which I've read multiple times. The government is giving themselves the ability to take away any regulation for any reason. That's what the bill says. We tried to put safeguards in place to put parameters around that.

Mr. Hunter: It's already there.

Ms Hoffman: If it's already there, then why wouldn't the government pass regulations around safeguarding the protections for long-term care and assisted living? Why wouldn't the government do that? If it's simply redundant, if it's just about – my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo used to talk about belts and braces. If it's just about belts and braces and doubling up on the protections that are already in place, why didn't the government pass that amendment?

I haven't met anyone in the wake of COVID who said: “You know what we need? We need the ability to get rid of protections and safeguards.”

Mr. Hunter: Untrue.

Ms Hoffman: Is the minister saying that he's met people who want to get rid of these safeguards and protections?

Mr. Hunter: It's untrue.

Ms Hoffman: What I'm telling you is that in the bill, the bill gives government the ability to take away safeguards and protections, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

I would just like to remind all members that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the floor, and I'd also like to encourage her to ensure that her remarks are through the chair.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I certainly welcome the minister who's heckling to direct his remarks through the chair as well.

To all members of the Assembly, through you, Mr. Speaker – and thank you for that reminder – I think that is important. When I talk to people in the wake of COVID, not one Albertan has said: “You know what we need to do? We need to find ways to reduce regulations and safeguards for people who live in long-term care and assisted living facilities.” When we look at the wake that

COVID has left in terms of death and illness and long-term grieving consequences for so many Albertans, this should be an opportunity for us to diligently focus on what needs to be done to improve and strengthen the care that seniors and other vulnerable Albertans receive when they are relying on one another, when they are relying on us to provide safe living and health care supports for them in the days that they are living in a facility.

There has been tremendous support for there to be additional resources put into long-term care and assisted living as opposed to fewer safeguards in the existing systems. So we created an opportunity through an amendment, and we brought it forward to this Assembly, to say, “Don’t worry; the government will not use this bill,” this bill that is giving them massive, sweeping powers to allow organizations and individuals to exempt themselves from regulations through OC. We gave the government an opportunity to say: “Don’t worry; we’re not going to do that to long-term care. We’re not going to do that in these specific situations.”

For the government to say this bill is about one thing, but the bill to clearly be written in a way – and maybe it’s that the government wasn’t clear to the drafters about what their intention was. I doubt it, but maybe that’s the issue, because this has created massive, massive areas where individuals who are volunteers and individuals who are receiving services, in arguments that we’ve presented, will be put at greater risk, potentially, should the government choose to use the legislation they’re giving themselves. Why would the government pass a bill and not use it? Beyond me. I’m assuming that when the government brings bills forward, they do it because they have an intended purpose and a desired outcome. That was one example of one of the amendments that we tried to bring forward to make sure that the worst case scenario wasn’t realized should this bill pass.

5:30

Maybe the current ministers sitting around the current cabinet table don’t have that intention. But intention doesn’t matter; legislation matters. When lawyers weeks or months or years from now are interpreting the law, they’re not going to look at what the minister said in the House; they’re going to look at what the law says. The stories and the examples you give aren’t what is held up in court; it’s the law. That’s what we are here considering, a law that is creating a lot of what I would argue is risk and liability. Again, I want to say that the intention that was given is, I think, a fine intention. Let’s talk about what the actual barriers are and what can be done to address them, because it isn’t in this bill.

I just want to close – I know our time is very precious, and I know my colleagues have much to say about this as well – by saying that Albertans absolutely are resourceful and volunteer focused and want to contribute to their communities, and people who are receiving that charity, that are on the receiving end of that volunteerism, deserve every right to be protected.

I do want to especially thank my colleagues who brought forward amendments around professional standards still applying even if you’re volunteering. I know that on many of the boards that I’ve sat on, when we look at board composition, some of the things we look at are skill sets: “Do we have a lawyer? Do we have an accountant?” They’re specifically chosen because of the skill set they bring and the professionalism they bring from their day job or their past job and how that can apply to the service of the organization.

That’s one of the reasons why one of the amendments was that people not be exempt from the professional standards that they have if they are accredited to be part of an association, like an accountant. If an accountant joins a board and is negligent, they should be held to the same standard. If a psychologist volunteers at a charity, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, that is doing something

harmful, that is engaging in conversion therapy, they should be held accountable to their professional standards as psychologists.

This shouldn’t be something where we’re seeing the other side defend and try to delay justice and the opportunity for us to bring forward thoughtful, thorough debate with amendments. The government should be receptive, and the government should heed the warnings that have been brought forward here through debate and act accordingly.

I encourage my colleagues to show that by voting no on third reading. Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has a brief question or comment.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East on the main bill.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the great opportunity. I am pleased to stand here today to express my support on Bill 58, the Freedom to Care Act. I would like to applaud and thank the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women for listening to the stakeholders who have voiced their concern on ways to reduce red tape so that our nonprofit organizations are being fully supported by our government.

The nonprofit sector is an economic driver which employs 280,000 Albertans and accounts for \$5.5 billion in GDP annually. This is a very important piece of legislation which will have a lasting positive impact on the hard work that Alberta’s nonprofit and charity organizations do to support the amazing communities in our province. I am proud to support an initiative that will be valuing the hard work of all the volunteers and nonprofit organizations in our communities. The Freedom to Care Act, Bill 58, will create a mechanism which will allow nonprofit organizations to perform public good free from regulatory burdens and unnecessary red tape.

Mr. Speaker, there are up to 26,400 nonprofit organizations in our province, and each year more than 1.6 million Albertans provide 262 million volunteer hours to support and help our surrounding communities. The value of volunteer time is estimated to be worth \$5.6 billion per year. For that, I would like to extend my appreciation to all the hard-working volunteers, leaders, and members for creating a supportive environment to ensure that our neighbouring communities are being well looked after.

Bill 58 seeks to authorize the cabinet through order in council to grant exemptions for nonprofit groups and will be requiring the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to report annually on exemption requests that cannot be addressed through existing processes or legislation and to provide individual volunteers with liability protection. The Freedom to Care Act aims to establish a central access point for information on regulatory and legislative exemptions and to guide organizations on how to apply for these exemptions in a timely fashion. For example, an exemption that may exist is food donation exemption laws, which protect donors from liability and allow Albertans to fill food hampers and donate to food banks and shelters.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to emergency situations, current regulations hinder the ways that nonprofit organizations operate. Some stakeholders will express that this legislation will help with short-term projects and responding to a crisis or emergency situation. It will ensure creation of a mechanism to allow nonprofits performing social good to apply for common-sense exemptions from redundant and unnecessary regulatory burden without creating more red tape.

We must keep in mind that Bill 58 will not be able to address challenges such as funding cuts, reporting requirements, administration burdens, grant eligibility requirements, time lags for

approvals, or grant funding. Mr. Speaker, Bill 58 will only have a mechanism that will allow for organizations to apply for exemptions from restrictions that are implemented for nonprofit establishments.

By adopting the Freedom to Care Act, this will allow charitable nonprofit groups to apply for common-sense exemptions from regulations that are designed primarily for commercial application. With the support of the Minister of Service Alberta this will ensure the process is regulated and correctly implemented. Sometimes there are no exemptions put in place for certain situations, so it is important that Albertans and organizations are able to quickly apply for such exemptions when needed. We need to enable Alberta's volunteers and give them the tools that they need. These requests are pushed to the front of the queue in the case of a pressing emergency. This means that Albertans will be able to quickly respond to crises as they occur. Before a request is looked at, these experts can assure Albertans that their health and safety will not be compromised by this process.

Often government regulations are tricky to navigate and can be difficult to understand. To supplement this legislation, the ministry also seeks to establish a website that will be available to all Albertans who wish to learn more about the process of applying for exemptions and give them easy access to the exemptions that are already in place. We can also assure all Albertans that the process will be quick and easy to ensure immediate response to emergency situations. In the past our province would step up to help during emergencies, and the Freedom to Care Act will only strengthen the current legislation that is implemented to keep our communities safe.

5:40

Our platform commitment is to cut red tape by one-third, reduce costs, speed up approvals, and free job creators to get more Albertans back to work. Alberta's industry panels aim to have the minister identify unnecessary red tape in every sector of Alberta's economy. Cutting red tape within government will allow the public sector to focus on serving Albertans and implement our outcome-based regulatory approach. We want to enable Alberta's volunteers and give them the tools they need.

In the past our province has stepped up to help during emergencies. There are countless examples of the selfless acts Albertans have performed. They go above and beyond to help during some of our province's worst crises.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 58 also introduces the volunteer liability protection, which aims to protect volunteers that cannot be held personally liable on behalf of the organization as long as the harm was not caused by wilful or criminal misconduct. The volunteer must be acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities and must be properly licensed, certified, or authorized. This liability protection will align with other Canadian jurisdictions that have similar legislation, protect Albertans, and cut unnecessary red tape. For example, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's Volunteer Protection Act has similar legislation to address these similar concerns, which has been in place for around 20 years. Nova Scotia's act protects volunteers from being held liable for damages if they were acting in good faith within their organization's mandate.

The Freedom to Care Act will create a mechanism which will allow nonprofit organizations to perform public good free from regulatory burdens and unnecessary red tape. The common focus is to eliminate red tape that is holding back the economy. These changes will bring more support and protection and more jobs into our communities and build trust with Albertans. This promised platform will always be a commitment and a way to protect workers and protect our thousands of volunteers, restore balance, and

strengthen democracy. With these regulations more Albertans will have the freedom to support others free from unnecessary burdens and the fear of potential liability. At the same time it is also important to remember why such regulations are in place.

If this legislation is passed, Albertans will see faster approvals, shorter wait times, and a sense of trust in the community, especially during emergency situations. We want to enable Alberta's volunteers and give them the tools they need. In the past our province has stepped up to help during emergencies. There are countless examples of the selfless acts Albertans have performed as they have gone above and beyond to help during some of our province's worst crises.

Everyone here remembers the flood of 2013. In Calgary this was the largest flood since the year 1932, and it had a lasting impact on our city. Tragically, five people lost their lives during this time, and many others who lost their property were devastated by the cost of repairs to infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I know that we would not have been able to recover from this disaster without the help of volunteers. I'm proud of the way Calgarians stepped up to the challenge, sacrificing their time and energy to help rebuild our city and support those most in need. Sometimes Albertans don't have time to worry about unnecessary regulations as the need is too pressing and the time is short. In this situation it was important for Albertans to be able to respond to the call for help. We appreciate their work and do not take any of it for granted.

Cutting red tape is about saving time and money for our job creators so that they can feel supported in creating jobs and boosting the economy. Mr. Speaker, the Calgary-East constituency is home to hundreds of families that will significantly benefit from Bill 58, that will allow organizations and volunteers to grow strong through the implementation of this legislation.

Again I applaud the minister and all the staff and the team members that have been involved in the crafting of Bill 58, that will ensure the protection of Alberta and will ensure that our population is supported and protected.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone in this Chamber to support this bill and support all individuals that are dealing with the challenges and the families that are affected. I hope that everyone will put forward their full support for such a significant piece of legislation, which will enable Alberta's volunteers to support others and give them the tools they need to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. Apparently, it's likely to be the last time I get to speak to a bill in this particular session, and I only have a few minutes to do so. I find myself trying to think about: what are the two things that are important for me to say given the limited amount of time I have available to me?

I think it's important that we point out that this bill was inherently deceptive in its design. Listening to the last speaker, I think it became quite apparent exactly why it is. As the speaker from Calgary indicated over 20, perhaps almost 30 times in his speech, this is really not about volunteers. This is really not about taking care of neighbours. It's really about the government side's belief in red tape reduction, which is essentially the reduction of health and safety standards in order to allow businesses to do things without following the regulations. Numerous times in that speech he talked about it being good for the economy, which is clearly not about volunteerism. It's clearly about opening a huge door for this

government to drive through reductions in health and safety standards for citizens of Alberta in support of their friends in the business community and nothing else. It's really been about – this bill is a straw man that really is fabricating unsubstantial realities in order to be able to do what the government wants to do.

On top of the fact that the bill does not actually do what the government is saying that they're doing, they've been politicizing volunteers over the last number of days in a very disrespectful manner, indicating that somehow we are opposed to volunteers when clearly that is nothing about what we said. I feel shame for this government, that they would take the time to be so disrespectful to people who are volunteers and use them in this pejorative sense here in the House, and I really wish the government would stand up and apologize for this display that we've seen over the last day or so. I think that volunteers are trying to come forward and trying to do the best in the generosity of their spirit and should be supported.

What we are not seeing in this bill is acts of the bill directed toward supporting volunteers. I know the government side of the House has talked about good Samaritan laws as an example here. If they had wanted to write a good Samaritan law, they would have done so, and they did not. We know they did not because they did not focus on the activities of the volunteers and indicate that they would be able to conduct themselves with the best of intent and be protected.

5:50

Instead, they focused on actually changing the status of the people who are committing the acts. So it's not about volunteerism anymore; it's about changing the status of the people. That would be like taking a good Samaritan law and saying: if you find somebody injured on the side of the road and they have a broken leg and you try to reset that leg and something goes wrong, we're going to designate you as a doctor for the purposes of that bone resetting. What an absurd thought. What a ridiculous thing to do, to somehow – we're going to designate you as somebody that you're not for the purposes of this particular act. That's what this act is about. It's about opening a door so that this government, when they feel like it, can chum up with certain people and shove them into a place where they don't have to pay attention to health and safety regulations when they normally would have to do so.

If it really was about volunteers, they could have followed the standard of good Samaritan laws that are existent all across this country and could have said that we are going to protect the actions of the people, but they don't protect the actions of the people. Instead, they redefine their status. That's what this government is doing here, which is why I believe that this bill, along with so many others that we have seen from this government, is inherently deceptive and misdirects people by telling them cute little stories about people that they know and then actually does not write into the legislation pieces of the act that will protect the actual characters in the stories that they talk about.

You know, watching the government do this, watching them politicize volunteers, watching them denigrate the opposition in completely ridiculous ways because they don't want you to pierce the veil of what they are doing here in the House and don't want you to pay attention to the fact that they have an agenda that is not supportive of the well-being of the citizens of the province of Alberta, I'm just tired of seeing this government do this time and time again, bill after bill, where they tell us that it's about some nice thing and that they're going to just open up a small, little doorway to allow a little bit of goodness to come out.

Instead, they crash down the walls and bring through a train wreck of activity, that they are not taking any responsibility for. I would love to see once this government take responsibility for their

behaviour. I'd love to once see them apologize for the terrible things that they have done in the province of Alberta and, previously, in the federal government. You know, I can tell you right now that I don't expect any kind of apology from this government because we never get it. We never get this government taking responsibility. We always get this churlish behaviour in which they pretend that they didn't do what they, in fact, have done. We see that time and time again. We see that with the niqab ban right now, we see that with this legislation, and we see that with Bill 70 as well, which will be debated later tonight, I understand.

Now, we know that if this government was actually trying to do something to help people in an emergency situation, they would have written the act that way. Instead, they have created a situation where people are going to get these exemptions. It's not on their behaviour. In other words, it's not like the good Samaritan law that says: you don't have to apply, when you're on the side of the road, in order to help the person that's injured; you just do it, and then the law comes in and helps you after the fact. They could have written it that way, but they chose not to do that.

What did they do? They said: "No; you come to cabinet. You come, and you work with us, and we'll kind of rub each other's backs. We'll figure out something, and then we'll slide you in." It's obviously not emergency, because if anybody knows how cabinet works, things like this do not happen quickly. They know that this cabinet is very slow. Look at how long it took them to respond to COVID in this province. I mean, it's completely ridiculous that they think this is an emergency response. This is an attempt for the cabinet to step in, to take control, to redefine the nature of who gets to be a nonprofit by circumventing the legislation that's there.

I can tell you, as somebody who has worked for nonprofits for many years of my life, who has been a senior manager in nonprofits, who's been on the boards of nonprofits and president of boards of nonprofits, that I see this as an attack on nonprofits, not a support of nonprofits. You know what nonprofits are doing right now? They are trying to lift the standard that they engage in when they work with clientele, moving away from the old idea that somehow any little old lady can provide services for people to actually saying: no; we want trained, educated people doing a high level of practice. This government is trying to move us back to an 1840s style of support in the community, and that's undermining the professionalism of the people in nonprofits.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted. The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me this afternoon, and what a lovely afternoon it is, indeed. I rise on a point of order, 23(h), (i), and (j) – you guessed it . . .

The Speaker: Get to the point.

Mr. Schow: . . . which would be, "makes allegations against another Member"; "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, from Edmonton-Rutherford, has been speaking now for several minutes, scarcely touching on the bill itself but, rather, spending the majority of his time casting aspersions across the aisle about what he thinks the government is doing to hurt Albertans and all other manner of, I

guess, inappropriate conduct that he thinks the government is engaged in. Now, to suggest that we are going back to the 1860s form of care: I'm not quite sure what he's referring to . . .

The Speaker: This isn't a point of order. It's nowhere close to a point of order. The hon. member is passionate about this issue, and that is entirely reasonable for him to be. You might disagree with his position, but it's not a point of order.

Debate Continued

Mr. Feehan: I can finish? Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your support.

I clearly am passionate because I have certainly dedicated a whole career to the nonprofits, to the community building itself up to support each other as a social worker. I do so proudly, and I stand here damn proud to be one.

The Speaker: Order. No need to use unparliamentary language.

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. Yes. You're absolutely right. I apologize and withdraw that word. Not the "proud" word but the other one.

I certainly want to say that I would love to be able to support this government if they were actually to bring in a bill that actually did what they stand up and say that they're trying to do when they come into this House. They continually do not do that. The language that comes out of their mouths when they describe the reasons why they chose to move toward this kind of a bill, their hopes, or intentions

are never consistent with the actual writing of the bill, and that's the problem here.

The problem here is that there are thousands of people in this province who dedicate their time and their energies to helping their neighbours all the time, and they certainly could have used a government stepping up and saying, "You know what? We know you're doing it, so what we're going to do is that we're going to provide you some exemptions that come in after the fact," just like we have done when we were in government and we allowed that to happen for farmers' markets and farm sales. They could have done it, but they didn't.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt. However, the time for debate on this matter has elapsed. The time is now 6 o'clock.

Speaker's Ruling Rules and Practices of the Assembly

The Speaker: I will, though, provide additional caution to members of the opposition. When members of the government are passionate about certain issues, they may make accusations that you disagree with about what the intentions of your organization may be. You provide them the same latitudes that the government has provided you this afternoon.

The House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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