



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 25, 2021

Day 117

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellis, Hon. Mike, Calgary-West (UC)
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Frey (formerly Glasgo), Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UC)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hunter, Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Issik, Hon. Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UC),
Government Whip
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UC)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UC),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UC)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (Ind)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UC)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, QC, Edmonton-South West (UC)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UC)

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)
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Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UC)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
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Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
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Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UC)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC)
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

Party standings:

United Conservative: 20

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
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Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary
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Chris Caughell, Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

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Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
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Ronald Orr	Minister of Culture
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
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Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism

Parliamentary Secretaries

Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Allard
Eggen
Gray
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Phillips
Rehn
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

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Barnes
Bilous
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Irwin
Rosin
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Select Special Child and Youth Advocate Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Schow
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Goehring
Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sabir
Smith
Turton

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
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Ceci
Long
Loyola
Rosin
Shepherd
Smith
Sweet
van Dijken

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Rutherford
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jeremy Nixon

Amery
Dang
Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Irwin
Long
Nielsen
Rehn
Rosin
Sigurdson, L.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
Deol
Ganley
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Neudorf
Renaud
Stephan
Williams

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Lovely
Pancholi
Renaud
Rowswell
Schmidt
Singh
Toor
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Walker

Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

Frey (formerly Glasgo)
Ganley
Hanson
Milliken
Nielsen
Rowswell
Schmidt
Sweet
van Dijken
Yao

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach
Feehan
Ganley
Getson
Guthrie
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Rehn
Singh
Turton
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 25, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing as we pay tribute to members who have passed since we last met.

Mr. John W. “Jack” Cookson October 29, 1928, to July 8, 2021

The Speaker: John W. “Jack” Cookson served three terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Lacombe from 1971 to 1982. He was the government whip from 1972 to 1975 and the minister of the environment from 1979 to 1982. Mr. Cookson attended the University of Alberta, earning a bachelor of science in agriculture degree in 1951 and a certificate in education in 1956.

After marrying, Mr. Cookson purchased a farm in the Lacombe area and served as a Lacombe county councillor from 1963 to 1971. Mr. Cookson returned to farming after his tenure in the Legislative Assembly. He turned to real estate, remaining an active member of the community. Jack Cookson passed away on July 8, 2021, at the age of 92.

Mr. Clint E. Dunford February 21, 1943, to October 14, 2021

The Speaker: Clint E. Dunford served four terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Lethbridge-West from 1993 to 2008. He was the minister of advanced education and career development from 1997 to 1999, minister of human resources and employment from 1999 to 2004, and minister of economic development from 2004 to 2006. Born in Manitoba and raised in Saskatchewan, Mr. Dunford completed his bachelor of arts in economics at the University of Calgary in 1966. His early career was in management and business consulting. Mr. Dunford was recognized for his outstanding civic and community contributions. He received the Queen Elizabeth II jubilee medal in 2002, and he was granted an honorary degree by the University of Lethbridge in 2011, where the Faculty of Management also established a scholarship in his name. Clint Dunford passed away on October 14, 2021, at the age of 78.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Cookson and Mr. Dunford, each as you may have known them.

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

Members, please remain standing for the playing of our national anthem.

Recording:

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

Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, welcome. Please be seated.

Members' Statements

Oil and Gas Industry Opponents' Funding

Ms Rosin: Mr. Speaker, the public inquiry report into foreign-funded campaigns to block Alberta's energy sector is out, and it found nearly 1.3 billion reasons to stand up for the industry and the people who work in it. As owners of the province's natural resources Albertans deserve to know the source of the funding being used to undermine their oil and gas sector. The inquiry and its final report shine a light on the sophisticated, co-ordinated, and well-financed public relations attacks that have spread misinformation on Alberta's energy resources to the world.

These were not small, grassroots groups struggling to raise awareness of environmental issues. These were fundraising machines backed by massive foundations funnelling hundreds of millions of foreign dollars into Canada, money that was used to wage war on the thousands of hard-working people who depend on our energy industry for their livelihood, the same people who lost their jobs and businesses because of the relentless attacks from professional protesters and campaign organizers. When those jobs disappeared by the thousands, the groups involved high-fived each other. They celebrated their successes as each pipeline project was delayed or cancelled, as Albertans were hurt, people lost their jobs, businesses went under, and families were devastated.

In a time when a growing world is in desperate need of cleaner, affordable energy, Alberta is perfectly poised to be the leader for years to come, but thanks to the organizations that continue to attack our energy industry, the rest of the world can't get access. We've been put at a competitive disadvantage because of these foreign-funded campaigns. Mr. Speaker, the Allan report shines a light on the anti-Alberta campaigns that have operated in the shadow of secrecy for years. This report is a wake-up call. Was it illegal? No. Was it wrong? Well, I believe that the Albertans who live in my constituency who own and work at oil and gas companies would tell you yes.

Mr. Speaker, we must learn from these well-executed strategies, which these campaigns employed so effectively, and we must learn to protect our energy resources and our workers and our people into the future.

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

COVID-19 Response

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fourth wave of this pandemic has been hard on so many Albertans: hundreds of lives lost; thousands of people hospitalized and placed in intensive care; surgeries cancelled; people with cancer told, because of the crisis created by this government, that their life-saving surgeries just weren't urgent enough; our front-line health care workers pushed to the breaking point, working long, stressful hours in an environment no one could be trained for, only to be spat on, attacked, harassed by those who don't believe in the realities of the pandemic. My heart goes out to each and every person who has suffered during this fourth wave and any of the three waves before it. We didn't need to see this. We did not need to be here.

Albertans are angry, and they're right to be. They're angry with a government that prioritized the Premier's popularity and political fortunes over the public health of Albertans. They are tired of this petulant and immature government that mocked, attacked, and belittled those who urged caution as the case numbers started to grow. They're angry at a government that ignored the looming crisis so they could sell hats and fund raise off their unfounded defiance to a very effective policy, vaccine passports. They're angry at a government that refuses to apologize or even take responsibility for this failure, which caused pain and misery and the near total collapse of our health care system.

I understand this anger and frustration. Let me state it again: these Albertans are right to be angry. This government spent two years and 3 and a half million dollars to investigate free speech. They found time to boost their own pay while threatening nurses with pay cuts. Surely, this government could find the time to openly investigate the greatest case of government incompetence that led to the greatest damage to our health care system Alberta has ever seen and contributed to the deaths of over 3,000 Albertans and counting. If they can't, let me warn them now. The anger they're seeing now will pale in comparison to what Albertans will bring to the ballot box at the next election.

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

Geothermal Energy Industry

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Alberta's geothermal opportunity spearheaded by Eavor Technologies, headquartered in Calgary and active in over 20 countries across the globe. This made-in-Alberta company has produced the world's first viable form of dispatchable, scalable, baseload, and non carbon emitting electricity. Some have gone so far as to call this the Holy Grail of power, which, I might add, was recently featured in the *New York Times*.

Eavor intends to leverage their novel technology to support job creation and establish a geothermal export-based industry in Alberta. This economic opportunity is too significant to overlook. To create geothermal employment opportunities, they are actively partnering with Indigenous communities, provincial oil and gas companies, international supermajors as well as the forestry and agricultural sectors.

Kevin Neveu, the CEO of Precision Drilling, has lauded Eavor's efforts and vision to support the provincial energy sector. For example, idle Precision Drilling rigs can be leveraged to construct Eavor-Loops while employing oil and gas workers. Precision Drilling also maintains that Eavor will play a vital role in enhancing ESG metrics, underscoring the importance of their partnership and the broader energy sector. Parallels can certainly be drawn between the TIER program and Eavor's technology to support foundational sectors of the economy in decarbonization efforts.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the government and the hon. Member for Calgary-North West in initiating the geothermal resource development act. However, more must be done to maximize the job-creating potential of this sector. Let us look no further than the legacy of Peter Lougheed and the role that he played in unlocking the economic potential of the oil sands. The same opportunity exists for the geothermal sector, and now is the time to act. Let's construct the first-ever loop of its kind in Canada right here in Alberta. Let us make Alberta Canada's home for geothermal energy technology.

Thank you.

COVID-19 Response and Children

Ms Pancholi: On June 18 the UCP members of this House stood by as the Premier told Albertans that he had no plan for the fourth wave of this pandemic. Despite concerns from many experts the Premier arrogantly declared that he, quote, just didn't see that scenario and that those raising alarms were, quote, promoting fear. Then, when the fourth wave hit us harder than anywhere else in Canada, the UCP, to deflect from their own negligence, quickly pointed the finger at Albertans, saying that this was, quote, a pandemic of the unvaccinated.

Well, Mr. Speaker, 660,000 of the unvaccinated are Alberta children who could not be vaccinated, children who should have been the top priority of this government. Instead, Alberta children were abandoned by the UCP. In a shocking move the UCP announced that contact tracing, testing, and isolation would end as case numbers were rising. The Education minister declared it was going to be a normal school year and then disappeared for the summer. The Children's Services minister provided no guidance to child care providers and parents and to this day refuses to take real action to make child care safe.

To no one's surprise, within weeks of the new school year there was chaos as cases in schools rose at an alarming rate. Lacking leadership from the UCP school boards scrambled with inconsistent policies and lack of information. Parents had to rely on rumour and gossip to find out if their child had been exposed to COVID. Parents told me that they felt the UCP had made them choose between their child's education and their health.

This fall children between the ages of five and 11 had the highest rates of COVID infection in the province. Hospitalization rates of children increased dramatically. Over 850 children had their surgeries or medical procedures deferred indefinitely. At the same time, the UCP refused our call to put a mental health support worker in every school and robbed children of a normal Thanksgiving and likely Christmas, too.

So now we know: the most predictable and preventable part of this fourth wave was the UCP themselves. Alberta parents will not forget how UCP MLAs, every single one of them, failed our children. Albertans will not forget.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness

Mrs. Frey: Mr. Speaker, October marks the month where we hold space for families who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss. Unfortunately, for many this immense grief and loss comes with shame and stigma, and all too often families suffer in silence. Unfortunately, pregnancy and infant loss is not as rare an occurrence as we would like to believe. I would bet that most don't realize that 1 in 4 women experience pregnancy or infant loss in their lifetime and that 1 in every 6 families struggles to become pregnant.

Each life lost, every child that was born asleep, every person no matter how small and fragile was a person who was loved, cared for, and so desperately wanted. For many women this painful loss occurs multiple times in their lives. Families carry it with them forever. Pregnancy and infant loss is a topic often shrouded in secrecy and shame. Many women are left reeling, believing that they could have done something different when the reality is that they probably did everything right. We as a society need to do more to ensure that these families are supported and aided in remembering the lives of their lost children.

On October 15 the Medicine Hat & District Health Foundation held their annual Walk to Remember to honour the children who are not with us and hold space for the families who mourn their loss.

This is an incredible event that allows families to walk a path lined with signs dedicated to remembering and healing. It is a tangible reminder that these families are not alone and that others are quite literally walking the same path. Initiatives like this and increased dedicated mental health support for women and families will go a long way to end the stigma. These supports bring comfort to all those who are suffering in silence. Increased awareness of this all too painful reality will serve to support women in these significant hours of need and cope with their enduring loss. Mr. Speaker, human life is precious; it is important, and it is sacred at all stages and in all its forms. We remember these families and pray for the ones that are gone too soon.

The Speaker: I'm sure all members of the House will join me in congratulating the hon. member on her marriage this summer. Congratulations.

Deputy Government House Leader Compensation

Mr. Dang: This government is in the midst of a public health crisis, where our ICUs are overwhelmed, where teams from other provinces and the Canadian Armed Forces are flying in to assist our stressed and overworked health care heroes. Instead of pledging support to the front-line health care workers, instead of supporting the calls for an investigation into the incompetence that led Alberta into the near collapse of our health care system, the UCP chose to reward a single member of their caucus with a \$12,000 raise, a \$12,000 pay hike, Mr. Speaker, for a single UCP MLA, the Member for Cardston-Siksika, the very member who thought it was funny to call one of my female colleagues "kitty cat" in this very Chamber.

This government has made it clear where they stand. The Premier bragged about his cuts to disabled Albertans, saying that breaking his promise to protect that funding they require would not be onerous. The Finance minister told Albertans that he thought slashing the pay of the very same nurses who are working themselves into exhaustion every single day in the ICUs was reasonable. The government promised a fiscal reckoning for Albertans, which, it turns out, just wasn't intended to be felt by members of the UCP. This is blatant hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. The people of this province deserve better than a government that pretends to believe in fiscal responsibility, only to give five-figure raises to a single MLA. I hope that the UCP hears the outrage from Albertans, who have been told to do more with less while UCP members are awarding their colleagues.

I call on them to realize the mistake that this was and undo this immediately. Our caucus is prepared to recall the committee and undo this today. All I wonder is if the UCP MLAs are finally willing to join us in doing the right thing.

The Speaker: I believe the hon. Government House Leader has a request for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do request unanimous consent to revert briefly to Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Physical Distancing in Legislature Chamber

95. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that despite Standing Orders 13(7), 16, and 32(4)(b) and for the duration of the 2021 fall sitting of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature and to allow for appropriate physical distancing within the Chamber during that time, a member may sit, speak, and vote in any seat that

has not been assigned to that member provided that the member immediately relinquishes that seat on the request of
(a) the member who has been assigned that seat, or
(b) the Speaker.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, this is a debatable motion; however, I believe that there may be agreement upon this. Is there anyone wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on the motion as proposed by the hon. the Government House Leader.

[Government Motion 95 carried]

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would like to make a brief statement prior to Oral Question Period. I would like to inform you that there has been a slight modification to the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations as a result of the change in caucus composition in the Assembly since the spring sitting. Question 8 on day 4 of Oral Question Period rotation, which is tomorrow, and one member's statement every third week was assigned to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, who was an independent member during the spring sitting. However, since that member is now a part of the United Conservative caucus, that member's question and member's statement are now allotted to a member of the United Conservative caucus.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

COVID-19 Case Increase and Response

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a warm welcome back to all members. According to *Hansard* on our last day here in the spring the Premier accused the Official Opposition of, quote, inventing a fourth wave where it doesn't exist. He then called us Chicken Littles. Since then we have lost another 827 Albertan lives; 93,000 more have been infected; 8,500 surgeries were cancelled; and Alberta has experienced the most dangerous fourth wave in Canada by far. Will the Premier today apologize, and, more importantly, will he admit today that he was dead wrong?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I've addressed all of that repeatedly over the past several weeks, and what we know is that Albertans have risen to the challenge in helping us to push down the fourth wave. Thankfully, we've now seen, for nearly the past month, a reduction in hospitalization numbers and new case numbers. We ask Albertans to continue to be vigilant. One of the most encouraging things about, you know – this fourth wave was really a reflection of undervaccination in our province. Since September 3 we've seen first-dose coverage go from 78 to nearly 87 per cent, significant progress, and I encourage all members to see that we continue to move that number up.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not all the Premier said that day. He also breached privilege when he claimed, "there is no delta variant modelling." This was not true, and Alberta Health has since released it. Had the Premier respected this House and answered honestly and had the modelling been subsequently released, the

obvious flaws in that model would have been apparent to all Albertans, and better decisions could have been made. Why did the Premier hide this information from members of this House?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, neither I nor the government did any such thing. We had not received any specific modelling on the delta variant, which was the subject to which the Leader of the Opposition refers. Dr. Hinshaw has released the modelling that informed her decision to announce moving from pandemic to endemic management in August of this year. What we now know is that we have seen a significant abatement in new cases, in the transmission rate, in the positivity rate, in the hospitalization rate, and let us hope that the momentum continues.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, as this UCP government hides from responsibility, they plead: well, you know, everybody had a fourth wave. Well, let's compare Alberta with Ontario. Alberta's case rate was six times higher, and our death rate was five times higher. So while other provinces had a fourth wave, only Alberta had this UCP government. Their reckless rush to reopen and their subsequent refusal to reverse course led to this crisis. To the Premier: how can Albertans trust him to lead in future crises if this UCP cabinet cannot admit when they got it wrong?

Mr. Kenney: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, Ontario experienced the same per capita level of ICU admissions during their spring wave as Alberta did in our fourth wave. We had a much less severe spring wave than Ontario and some other provinces. Saskatchewan now has a higher level of per capita ICU admissions than we did. Manitoba had to export ICU patients to Alberta, Ontario, and other provinces. Jurisdictions all around the world have been hit hard at various times, but one thing that's consistent in other places is that generally their oppositions have tried to play a constructive role rather than seek to politicize a public health crisis.

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

Ms Notley: No other jurisdiction has had a government so irresponsible as this one has been. Now, by the end of July there were already signs that the UCP government's experiment was failing. Cases were going up and hospitalizations had reversed course and members of this UCP caucus say internally that they knew it wasn't working. By early August independent models foreshadowed the crisis ahead, yet what did this government do? It went AWOL for a month in a profound demonstration of negligence, incompetence, and laziness. To the Premier: why, when he knew his experiment was failing, did he hide for so long before acting?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, like most of what the opposition leader says, that's completely false. I actually had more news conferences in the month of August than all of the Premiers in Canada, with the exception of Nova Scotia, which was in an election. We responded to the fourth wave with additional public health measures on September 3 and further on September 14. We know what the NDP's approach has been to this all along. They've always craved an Australian-style hard and brutal lockdown, the consequences of which would require turning this province into a virtual police state. We would never do that.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier went on vacation. He left Alberta without leadership. From August 9 to September 3 as cases skyrocketed, surgeries were cancelled, and ICUs burst at the seams, every single minister disappeared. The David Copperfield

cabinet: every single one of them went into hiding. Where were they, Premier? Where was your Health minister, your Deputy Premier, your Finance minister? A single, solitary adult over there: where were they?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, ministers continued to exercise their functions, as did I, with regular briefings. But the reality is that Alberta has been hit hard by COVID-19, like virtually every place on the face of the planet. The key thing is that Albertans have come together, yet again, to help save lives, and I want to thank Albertans for stepping up, especially the critical number who've stepped up to get vaccinated in recent weeks. We've seen over 300,000 additional Albertans step up for their first shot. We're seeing second-dose coverage increase. That is very good news for the future.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier finally returned from vacation, he claimed he was in daily contact with his office and had regular briefings on COVID. But we now know that he only had two COVID briefings, one on August 19 and another a week later, the same day when we started reporting over a thousand new cases a day. Two briefings. No decisions. No actions. No communications with Albertans. To the Premier: does he think this is the best Albertans deserve?

Mr. Kenney: None of that is true, Mr. Speaker. Unless I'm mistaken, I don't think the NDP has a tracker on my phone to listen to the hours I spend on the phone, including during a two-week break, the first break of that duration I've had in three years. I know that the Leader of the Opposition, when she was Premier, took time away, and I don't think that's unreasonable. With respect to when decisions were taken – for example, rolling out the booster shots to residents of long-term care. Moving forward, I'm planning for the \$100 incentive, which helped increase vaccination rates, and many other measures during that period.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Rates

Ms Notley: When you take a vacation, you don't leave the government untended while your health care system is falling to pieces.

Now, on June 16 the Premier said, quote, we are leading Canada on second-dose coverage, and we estimate 15 per cent of our population has immunity through natural infection. Now, here's the Premier on September 3: COVID is hitting Alberta harder than anywhere else in Canada because we have the lowest vaccination rate in Canada. Why won't the Premier admit that his politically motivated rhetoric, his best summer ever, was a key factor that stalled our vaccination rates at a time when they should have been ramping up?

Mr. Kenney: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the NDP is attacking Albertans for having enjoyed a normal summer and to do so safely. What I recall is the NDP organizing – what was it? – a dozen partisan events during the Calgary Stampede. Based on her own rhetoric I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition: why did she organize superspreader events in Calgary? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is the one that's attacking Albertans for having low vaccination rates. He just did it. Now let's talk about what did help increase Alberta's vaccination rates:

vaccine passports. Here's the Premier on July 13: we will not facilitate or accept vaccine passports. But on the 12th of October he admitted that it seems to have had at least some effect to increase vaccination rates and therefore probably reduce case numbers and hospitalizations. Will the Premier admit that it was his own personal opposition to vaccine passports that delayed introduction of the most helpful policy to date for the people of this province?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, identifying undervaccination as the primary reason why Saskatchewan and Alberta have been hit harder in the fourth wave is not to attack people. Only the NDP frames everything in the context of an attack.

With respect to the proof of vaccination program, the REP, it's true that I and this government were opposed to a system like that and for, I think, legitimate reasons, as was every single government in Canada, including Prime Minister Trudeau, who spoke against this concept in May. But we've all changed our view based on the reality, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see those vaccine rates . . .

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government waited until weeks after the rest of the country had figured it out. B.C. announced their passport on the 23rd of August, Ontario on September 1, but here the Premier waited as hospitalizations skyrocketed, surgeries were cancelled, the Canadian Armed Forces were deployed to Alberta. Why? So his party could fund raise against it. Premier, exactly what was your fundraising benchmark? Exactly how much money did the UCP have to raise before you put the health of Albertans over that of the coffers of your party?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a typically vile accusation coming from the NDP. With respect to proof of vaccination programs, the governments of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick announced theirs after this government did. All governments in Canada over the course of about a month decided that it was, given undervaccination, necessary to protect public health and safety through measures such as this.

With respect to fundraising I'd like to point out that in the very first week of the pandemic, in mid-March, the NDP was sending out fundraising e-mails to profit from a pandemic. How disgusting.

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

COVID-19 Response and Health System Capacity

Ms Notley: This Premier was fund raising off a decision to avoid doing the thing that would keep Albertans safe by his own admission, full stop. He should admit it. Albertans deserve to know about that. They deserve to hear about it, and they deserve to have an apology from this Premier. Why won't they get that?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, look, the essential thing is this, that every place on Earth has been hit hard by a pandemic that has changed, that has made different challenges in different jurisdictions. Here in Alberta we have sought to take a balanced approach rather than the kind of punitive hard lockdowns that the NDP have always coveted. I want to thank Albertans for rising to the challenge. Let's continue to move up those vaccination rates so that we can avoid future waves and be done with this thing once and for all.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, every province did not experience what Alberta did for the fourth wave. Alberta had five times the death rate of Ontario. Now, the impact of the wave goes even beyond that. At least 8,500 Albertans have had their life-changing surgeries either cancelled or put on hold. Ed Mason was in preop when his skin graft was cancelled, Dave MacLeod had to wait longer for his heart valve to be replaced, and Eric Mulder was left with a scan of his brain tumor without a plan for it to be removed. What does the Premier have to say to these Albertans, and will he take any responsibility for their pain and their suffering?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Ontario suffered three times the deaths of Alberta in the first wave. Quebec suffered six times the per capita deaths of Alberta in the first wave. This disease has hit different jurisdictions hard at different times. That's simply the reality of it. It's not politics; it's the nature of this virus. Of course it is terrible to see that individuals have suffered as a result of surgery postponements. That is why we urge Albertans to help protect their neighbours, their loved ones, and themselves by stepping up to get vaccinated.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what we've learned from the Premier's answers today. They can't trust him to share critical information or even admit when it is shown that he hid it. He feels no regret over his decisions, and he holds no one accountable for the fourth wave because – you know what? – it happened everywhere. This is exactly why we need a committee to compel witnesses, documents, and testimony. Once again, will the Premier agree to an all-party committee to review his cabinet's decisions in this pandemic, or will he once again refuse to learn from his so many mistakes?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely commit that the government will launch a comprehensive review of Alberta's response to COVID-19 to learn lessons from what we've done right, what we haven't done right, and to better prepare us for – God forbid – any future pandemics. But what we will not do is take the senior leadership of our Health department and AHS off the front lines at a critical time to be part of a political circus run by the NDP. We need to focus on the current crisis, keeping Albertans safe. There will be plenty of time to do a retrospective analysis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie is next.

Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2013 southern Alberta flood caused \$5 billion in damage, displacing many residents, and it changed the landscape along the Elbow River. Following that natural disaster, the government embarked on a lengthy and in-depth plan to prevent another one-in-a-century flood. To the Minister of Transportation. Construction is supposed to begin on the Springbank off-stream reservoir, just west of Calgary, in early 2022. Is the government still on track along that timeline?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the member for the question. SR 1 is the best option to protect Calgary and southern Alberta against future catastrophic flooding. Alberta Transportation has acquired 99 per cent of the 3,700 acres of land required for the project, and we worked with the landowner to negotiate voluntary land sales. Just last week the construction tenders were sent to prequalified bidders. Construction on this project is slated to begin in February 2022.

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remembering the 2013 flood hits home to many Albertans. I personally remember cooking food and helping friends dig out of their homes, that were devastated. Since then the government embarked on its plan to turn SR 1 into a reality. Support for the project, however, was far from unanimous. Some community groups fought for other plans, claiming that they would be less damaging to the landscape. To the same minister: how did the government go about ensuring that all voices were heard during the consultation process?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Transportation has undertaken significant consultation on the SR 1 project with key stakeholders, including all potentially affected First Nations and Indigenous groups, the city of Calgary, and Rocky View county. Provincial and federal regulators both ruled earlier this year that SR 1 is indeed in the public interest. My department will work to ensure that the project complies with the regulatory requirements and will continue to engage with key stakeholders.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has engaged with stakeholders on the reservoir project since 2014 and has pursued all available options to acquire the land since 2016. The minister also just stated that 99 per cent of the land needed for the reservoir has been acquired; however, one landowner has not accepted the government's final offer. To the same minister: how will your department settle this impasse with the aforementioned landowner?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Transportation dealt with them in a very respectful manner over an extended period of time. Expropriation is a last resort if voluntary land sale agreements for SR 1 cannot be reached. I do recognize that one landowner may be disappointed that we have had to resort to expropriation. However, the process allows a landowner to challenge the compensation for their property to the Land and Property Rights Tribunal. In order to complete the project in 2025 and, more importantly, to prevent delays, Alberta Transportation must trigger the expropriation process now to have all the required land in place.

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

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, during this fourth wave I have heard heart-wrenching stories and reports from health care workers and patients about surgical delays, procedures postponed or cancelled, causing pain and worry, causing fear and anxiety for so many Albertans. We know of at least 8,500 cases, and each of these numbers is a story of suffering caused by this government's incompetence. They deserve answers, so will the Minister of Health report to this House the total number of cancelled surgeries to date, and if he does not know, will he report back tomorrow with the exact number, no hiding, no games?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I feel for the patients and families who had their surgeries and other services cancelled during this fourth wave, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all health care workers for stepping up to provide the tremendous service that they provide to Albertans with passion, compassion, and dedication. As the hon. member knows, the ICUs are still under strain, but we're

supporting AHS in gearing back up as fast as they can, and we're firmly committed to the goal of catching up as quickly as we can. As I get more details in regard to the number of surgeries and the plan going forward, I'm happy to bring that back to this House.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton–City Centre has the call.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I know many impacted by these delays who suffered or watched friends and family suffer while waiting for their life-changing procedures that were postponed because this government thought it was more important to party this summer than to protect public health and given that no one in this government has been up front with those impacted by the delays, will the Minister of Health report to those who are still waiting on how long it will take to fully clear this surgery backlog? When will every Albertan that's been impacted know the exact date of their rescheduled surgery? This waiting game that the government is playing with Albertans' health care is horrific and disgraceful.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that question will take some time. As the hon. member knows, we had to cancel a number of surgeries to be able to respond to the fourth wave, and that's why it's really important that I message to all Albertans to follow the rules provided by the chief medical officer of health and to get vaccinated. If people have questions about getting vaccinated or have some concerns, please talk to a health care professional. It's important not only that we protect each other and protect our loved ones but that we protect our health care system so that as quickly as possible we can get surgeries rebooked and we can address the concerns raised by the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:10

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that what's important is that this government presents a credible plan and given that this Premier has refused to take responsibility and the former Health minister also refused, which is disappointing given that they both bear direct responsibility for the human suffering caused by this UCP's best summer ever, and given that once again Albertans are left looking for leadership as they wait for the plan to clear our surgical backlog, can the current Health minister take responsibility, own up to these failures, and tell those suffering and waiting for treatment what additional supports he'll provide? And, Minister, can you please be specific? These Albertans deserve a plan, not more empty platitudes.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier appointed me as Minister of Health with three key priorities. The first was actually to build capacity – and that's capacity not only to get through the fourth wave but capacity to be able to respond to the cancelled surgeries – to increase vaccinations to protect us going forward, and then build a contingency plan to make sure that we can deliver on those surgeries. I am focused on that, and I will deliver on that.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, while this government was living their best summer ever selling hats, plotting to cut the pay for front-line health workers, fund raising on their refusal to bring in vaccine passports, and mocking everyone who suggested there was trouble looming,

Albertans were worried. They watched cases grow, hospitalizations climb higher and higher, and ICUs filled to capacity and beyond, and the government did nothing until it was far too late. Can the Minister of Health explain to Albertans why he thinks there should not be an immediate public review of this massive failure of leadership by the Premier, his cabinet, and every single member sitting on that side of the House?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. You know, as indicated by the Premier already, our focus is on getting through the fourth wave. Even though the numbers are coming down and the measures that the government put in place, including the REP and increasing vaccinations, are helping trend in the right direction, we're not out of the woods yet. Our numbers in ICU are still higher than they were in the third wave. Our focus of AHS and our health staff needs to be on getting through the fourth wave, and there will be an opportune time in the future for doing a review.

Ms Gray: Given that the last time this government attempted a review, it was a year late and hidden until enough people spoke out demanding to see it and given that Albertans suffered, got sick, lost loved ones, and are tired of waiting for the most secretive and least accountable government in Canada to do the right thing and account for their disastrous failures, can the Minister of Health tell those Albertans looking for answers why the UCP drove us headfirst into this fourth wave, why he would deny Albertans justice for the lives lost, answers for the mistakes made, accountability for those responsible? This government cannot hide from its mistakes any longer.

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as indicated, our government moved to put restrictions in place to get down the fourth wave, and it's having results. I want to thank all Albertans for doing their part not only to get vaccinated but following the advice of the chief medical officer of health to get the wave down.

But, as indicated, Mr. Speaker, we're not out of the woods yet. We need to be focused on providing services to Albertans, particularly those at the highest levels of ICU. So there will be a time – there will be a time – for us doing a review. That time is not now, but we will do that review, learn from this so we can do better in the future.

Ms Gray: Given that accountability means owning up to mistakes, being up front with people, small businesses, and the constituents of Alberta and given that the Premier has already said that he doesn't support a public review of his failed pandemic response by an all-party select special committee and given that no one expected more from the least trusted and least supported Premier in Canada, there are 59 other UCP MLAs. Will the government whip and associate minister explain why she doesn't support the UCP government caucus members being able to break ties with their Premier and have a free vote on whether to proceed with a fully public review of the pandemic response? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. The Government House Leader has the call.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There you go again, the NDP playing fast and loose with the truth. There is a motion before this House that will be debated today to be able to bring in a COVID debate inside this Chamber. Will that hon. member support me in fast-tracking that motion to make sure that all members of

this House have an opportunity to be able to debate, to discuss the situation around COVID-19 and reject the NDP's approach, which would be to take health care workers away from the important work that they need to do during the fourth wave? A simple question to the hon. member. Yes or no? Will she support the COVID debate?

Premier's Leadership

Mr. Loewen: The vast majority of Albertans, including many in the UCP caucus and cabinet, have lost trust and confidence in by far Canada's least popular Premier and his policies. Whether it's standing up for Alberta against Ottawa, COVID response, or health care, the Premier never fails to disappoint. Based on these policy failures and many more, I think confidence within government is essential. To the Minister of Justice: do you support the Premier? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, let me be clear. I do have absolute confidence in the Premier of Alberta. Whilst it is appropriate for us to have policy disagreement, as it should be in a democracy and in any government across this land, at a time of crisis all of us must work together to solve the crisis that has befallen our province. I do not want the pandemic response to be a source of division and disunity in this province.

Mr. Loewen: Given that recent polls show that two-thirds of Albertans that voted UCP in the last election no longer support the Premier and given that this Premier's policies and your spending have left this province in over \$100 billion of debt, to the Minister of Finance. Albertans no longer trust government policies. Do you still support this Premier? Yes or no?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. I support this Premier and this government's agenda unequivocally. We have worked hard to create conditions for economic recovery and now economic growth. We're starting to see the benefits of that pro-economic agenda – jobs, pipelines, and the economy – with unprecedented levels of investments starting to return to this province. I support this Premier and this government's agenda.

Mr. Loewen: Given that Albertans are frustrated, angry, and some have even lost hope and given that this Premier's policies and the unpopularity of the Premier make it very difficult for Albertans to trust government policy at all, to the Minister of Environment and Parks. Tell Albertans: do you still support this Premier? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly do support the Premier, and of course I support this government taking strong action to help protect Albertans during the COVID-19 pandemic. What I can tell you that I and the majority of Albertans do not support is that hon. member travelling the province with people with extreme views when it comes to COVID-19. In fact, that hon. member's position, from what I can tell, is to stand by while thousands of Albertans die. This side of the House categorically rejects that approach and will continue to work hard each and every day to help protect Albertans' lives and livelihoods.

COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the last time that we were in this Chamber, the Minister of Education assured Albertans that there would be no testing, tracing, or isolation needed for COVID-19 in

schools. She promised that everything was going to be back to normal and ignored the concerns of students, staff, and families. It wasn't until after the fourth wave was crashing into Albertans that the minister reappeared to tell people that the plan had changed and that if you had COVID, you probably shouldn't go to school after all. It's clear that this minister has failed Alberta families. Will she stand in this House and apologize to the students, staff, and families she put in harm's way with her failure to lead?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education has risen.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The safety and security of our schools, making sure that students and staff were able to go to school, has always been my top priority. As I travelled the province through August and early September, I heard more and more how students and staff and the parents in general and community members wanted to get back to school. They were anxious to get back into the classroom. I'm glad that through the pandemic, as it's ever evolving, we were able to change our guidance, but we always followed the expert advice of the chief medical officer of health.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the minister represents a riding in the Alberta Health Services central zone and given that prior to this she also served as a school trustee in that same area and given that the job of the Education minister is to lead for Alberta families and given that this is question period and Albertans deserve answers, Minister, can the minister report exactly how many cases of COVID-19 have been reported in central zone schools so far this school year?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it rich that the member opposite continues to ask questions about the number of cases when right now across the province we have 0.03 per cent of cases in our schools. That is encompassing about 90,000 staff, 730,000 students, so 0.03 per cent of cases. No schools are online learning right now; they're all in-school learning. There are only two schools at outbreak status of 10-plus cases out of 2,415 schools. I'm happy to report that.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: Given that a leaked AHS document from October 5 shows that 170 schools in the central zone were experiencing outbreaks of COVID-19 and given that one of those outbreaks was Stettler elementary school, which had 110 students with COVID-19, and given that Albertans are tired of the spin of this minister and government and that they deserve them to be up front with Albertans about the state of COVID in schools, Minister, no more hiding. Just how many kids have been made sick as a direct result of the government's failure to lead, and if the minister doesn't have ...

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . the answers, will she report back to this House with those numbers by this time tomorrow?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:20.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the member opposite just asked that question when the member opposite should be apologizing for not doing her homework before going to the media with an internal Alberta Health Services

document that she obviously didn't understand. It was reckless to misrepresent the facts, and in fact that Stettler school of 110 only had seven actual cases. The Ponoka elementary school: she reported 89; it actually had 14. Bentley school: 66 reported; actual, nine. She misrepresented and created chaos for parents. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Institution COVID-19 Safety Measures

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I stood with faculty and staff at the Mount Royal University who are frustrated, tired, and angry about this government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's been over a month since this government announced its version of a vaccine passport, yet postsecondary institutions still have no guidelines on how to implement the system. They've been abandoned by this government once again. When will the minister do his job and give these schools guidelines to keep staff and students safe?

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

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see the hon. member again. I appreciate the question. However, I'm a little perplexed. There are guidelines right on the government of Alberta website that provide information as to what postsecondary institutions can do. It stipulates that they're not eligible for the restriction exemption program, but it also stipulates that those institutions can implement a proof-of-vaccination program. It stipulates by what date they should aim to have students and staff fully vaccinated, which is November 1. It also stipulates other exemptions that exist for dining halls and other facilities. All that information is on the website.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government has cut almost \$700 million from postsecondary institutions and given that monitoring and checking the vaccine status of tens of thousands of people on campus every day is labour intensive and costs these schools lots of money – this government is expecting these schools to cover the cost from an already devastated budget – will this minister step up and provide the necessary funding today for schools to be properly implementing their vaccine passport systems?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to talk a little bit about the numbers. I think last session the NDP was saying that we cut a billion from postsecondary, but I know the member just said \$700 million. I guess numbers change, but that's just what we have to expect. You know, when it comes to support for our postsecondary institutions, I've been working very closely with all of our institutions to help provide any support that they need during this time. We've distributed over 320,000 rapid test kits to many of our postsecondary institutions. Again, an open invitation to them: anything that we can do to help, we're there for them.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government abandoned contact tracing in the summer and given that the faculty association president at MRU said that they desperately need resources for contact tracing and that the MRU staff association president echoed the concerns, saying very emphatically that staff are simply not feeling safe, will the minister tell Albertans here today how many students and staff and faculty have contracted

COVID-19 since the start of the school year, and if he can't do that today, will he commit to delivering that answer tomorrow?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as we're dealing through and continuing to fight through COVID-19, one of the most important things that we can do is encourage all Albertans, including postsecondary institutions, to be vaccinated. I know in conversations with many of our postsecondary leaders over the course of the summer that a high number of students, staff, and faculty at our institutions are vaccinated, and I commend them for that and encourage more Albertans and more individuals within our postsecondary sector to get their COVID vaccine. Again, I'm happy to work with our postsecondary institutions to provide the support they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore is what I have on my list.

COVID-19 Vaccination of Children and Pregnant Women

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must continue to prioritize the ongoing increase in vaccine uptake like we've seen in areas like mine, Chestermere-Strathmore, which includes a lot of good uptake in visible minorities and First Nation communities. Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, and there's still a great deal of vaccine hesitancy and a tremendous amount of information which causes anxiety and confusion. To the Minister of Health: where can pregnant women go to get the best advice about the benefits and the risks of vaccination?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. Dr. Hinshaw, our chief medical officer of health, has regularly addressed topics of vaccine safety, pregnancy, and fertility. In fact, Dr. Hinshaw is hosting a telephone town hall this Wednesday, October 27, from 6:15 to 7:45. Joining her will be Dr. Costello, an associate professor with the Cumming School of Medicine at the U of C, to discuss COVID vaccines, pregnancy, and fertility. You know, I urge anyone who is interested in this, Albertans who are watching to please preregister by noon or by going to alberta.ca . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Given that our heroes in health care have done a phenomenal job keeping us safe and healthy through the COVID pandemic and that, through you, Mr. Speaker, to them, we thank them immensely and given that we've seen a tremendous uptick in vaccine delivery to pregnant women and that you're also, of course, having this town hall – and thank you for that as well – on Wednesday, October 27, to the same minister: how are we helping our health care providers give pregnant women the best information to make informed decisions on vaccination?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. These vaccines are safe for pregnant women. Both the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization have recommended the COVID-19 vaccines as safe for pregnant women and those who

are breastfeeding. They've based those recommendations on the data from thousands of pregnant individuals who have received the vaccine and not shown any increased risk. The government of Alberta and AHS have put out a number of resources and FAQs for expectant families and practitioners to consult, and they're regularly updated with the latest guidance and recommendations. I encourage any Albertans who have questions to reach out to their doctors, or they can call 811.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Given that vaccines are one of our most effective tools against COVID-19 along with masking and social distancing at this time and given that we continue to see vaccine uptake – through you, Mr. Speaker, to all Albertans, we thank you so, so much for that – and given that parental consent is required for a minor to get vaccinated, to the Minister of Health: could you please elaborate on these really important steps that you've taken to provide parents with all the information that they need to make an informed decision?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We've done a number of things to try to increase awareness. This includes establishing a vaccine awareness expense code for a physician to do outreach and answer questions to people who may have concerns or questions about that. Parents can also contact 811, or Health Link, which offers translation services in over 270 languages. We have resources online, and we continue to add more. You know, I know that parents may have questions. We need to answer those questions, and as part of my mandate as Minister of Health we'll continue to look at other ways that we can get information out there and reduce vaccine hesitancy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a question to ask.

Canadian Energy Centre

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The long-overdue Allan inquiry has finally been released, and the commissioner had some harsh words for the UCP's war room. He said that the war room has faced universal criticism since its inception and that its reputation may be damaged beyond repair. In addition, the report states that its credibility is seriously compromised by having three cabinet ministers, including the Minister of Energy, on its board of directors. These same criticisms have been made by Albertans for years. Will the Energy minister finally take responsibility for the massive failure of the war room and shut it down once and for all?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the public inquiry report found was that these campaigns were even larger and more formidable than we ever imagined. To quote the words of Tzaporah Berman in the report: "It's dozens of campaigns . . . it's a movement or movements." Well, that movement or movements is like money looking for the next thing. The next thing: it might be carbon capture, it might be hydrogen, or it might be critical and rare earth minerals. We have to protect Alberta so that we can develop those . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

2:30

Ms Ganley: Given that the war room never misses a chance to shoot itself in the foot – it fired back at the Allan inquiry, but like every other attempt, it missed the point and once again embarrassed itself – given that at the end of the day the Allan inquiry and the war room were left bickering with each other about who wastes more of Albertans' monies, given that the war room is absurd, but the inquiry was nothing more than a long-delayed, overbudget Google search, can the minister explain why instead of creating jobs, she wasted Albertans' time and wasted their money?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, what we've learned from the report is that this is money looking for the next target, and we need to protect the energy resources of the future. To show the magnitude of what we're up against and why we need to collaborate as an industry, to quote Tzeporah Berman again: "Fourteen environmental organizations and five First Nations groups on both sides of the border are collaborating in the most incredibly effective coalition I've ever seen in my life, to bring the story of the tar sands to the world and rebrand it as 'dirty oil.'" Well, they're going to try to do that same thing to hydrogen and claim it is dirty hydrogen.

Ms Ganley: Given that neither the war room nor the Allan inquiry did anything to spare Albertans from the \$1.3 billion bet the UCP made on Trump's re-election and given that neither the war room nor the Allan inquiry did anything to spare Albertans from the multibillion-dollar corporate handout, which failed to create any jobs at all, and given that the Allan inquiry and the war room are both run by UCP insiders, can the minister explain why the only jobs created by this so-called fight-back strategy are the ones for the few close personal friends of this UCP cabinet? What about everyone else?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, I think we can learn from the public inquiry that one job that was created by the previous government was Tzeporah Berman's job, being the co-chair of the oil sands advisory committee. We see that just last week she targeted carbon capture utilization and storage as being something that's not acceptable, yet the International Energy Agency has said that there is no pathway to net zero without carbon capture. That's what the previous NDP government have brought to us, and that's why we have to fight for the energy resources of the future.

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

Nonprofit Organization Funding and Regulations

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few questions for the Minister of Finance. Now, Steve Allan's book report found no wrongdoing; regardless, the UCP says that they will implement the recommendations, which involve unbelievable volumes of red tape and regulations for nonprofits and charities. Now, nonprofits stepped up and responded to every wave of COVID-19, including the fourth, when the UCP went on vacation. Some thanks they're getting now. Will the Minister of Finance remove the uncertainty caused by these odious recommendations and simply reject those ill-advised portions of the report and give some certainty to nonprofits and charities?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I find that question a distraction to the substance in the Allan report. We have found that there have been hundreds of millions of dollars that have poured into Canada to keep Alberta's responsibly, ethically produced energy in the ground in this province at the expense of tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans. Albertans need to know the truth, the truth that the Allan

report brought to light, so that we can combat misinformation during the next wave.

Ms Phillips: Well, given that, here is some substance. According to the Muttart Foundation Alberta's charities received .29 per cent of funds from outside Canada in 2019 – .29 per cent – and given that this report is recommending sweeping new bureaucracy and sticky red tape for nonprofits, cumbersome reporting requirements that will hinder their ability to raise money, cost them more in staffing, all while helping those affected by the pandemic, to the minister: will he rule out the Allan inquiry's recommendations for new paperwork and red tape and, instead, allow nonprofits to get on with their important work of responding to COVID-19?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate and greatly respect the great work that so many nonprofits have done during the pandemic, particularly as they've served Albertans in a variety of ways. We have worked hard to reduce the regulatory burden, modernize our regulatory system, and effectively make it easier for nonprofits to do the work that they want to do, and we will continue to make life easier for nonprofits. But we will also stand up for the energy industry. We will stand up for those tens of thousands of oil field workers who will support their families from oil and gas.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, given that these recommendations will overburden small nonprofits – they are significant new changes, and there are very small nonprofits at stake here. For example, in the minister's own seat the Stitch Club of Grande Prairie donated 5,000 handmade items to help people stay warm through the winter. The stitch club does not have time for unnecessary paperwork. Their hands are busy knitting, and I'm sure they would appreciate the minister doing the same, so will he . . .

The Speaker: Order. I find it very difficult to hear anything but a preamble for talking about a stitch club in some location. If you stick to the question, I'm sure that that will be much better for the Assembly. You may conclude. You have seven seconds.

Ms Phillips: Given that the minister has not ruled out these regulations, will the minister assure nonprofits that they won't have a mountain of new red tape? Yes or no?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I fully expect that the stitch club in Grande Prairie is supportive of the energy industry, unlike the members opposite. We will continue to ensure that nonprofits have minimal red tape so that they can continue to serve Albertans, and we greatly appreciate their service during these last 18 months.

I would suggest this. It's refreshing to hear the members opposite talk about deregulation and red tape reduction because they spent four years adding regulatory burden to every business and Albertan in the province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Agricultural Land in Northern Alberta

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The agricultural sector has contributed greatly to this province's wealth and prosperity and has made it what it is today. Not only does farming and ranching economically support tens of thousands of Albertans but feeds millions of Albertans, Canadians, and those around the world. But perhaps even more importantly to us, agriculture is the

foundation of our Alberta heritage and western culture. Does the Minister of Environment and Parks agree that farmers and ranchers are essential to Alberta's past and to our future?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, talk about a softball. Of course, I one hundred per cent agree with the hon. member that farmers and ranchers are one hundred per cent important for our future. I will tell you that we continue to work through deregulation when it comes across all industries in our province but in particular when it comes to agriculture. We'll continue to do that going forward, continue to fix up so many of the mistakes of the former NDP environment minister.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, given that a number of my constituents have applied for new farmland under public lands management disposition, have paid thousands in fees, have applied over three years ago in some cases, despite many follow-up e-mails from myself in the office, from the farmers and ranchers themselves and given that this means that farming and ranching operations who are doing this application remain in limbo until the application is granted, what can this minister do to reduce the apparent backlog in this process, process the applications, and help these farmers, ranchers, and their families?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report to the hon. member and to the House that in 1997 there was a commitment for 136,000 acres in northern Alberta to be sold to farmers inside the northern part of our province, which was part of a land swap for green area to white area. I'm happy to report to the House that there are only 15,000 acres left of that promise to be completed. We're entering into the final stage of that 15,000 acres and expected to be completed in early 2022.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Mackenzie county, our province's largest, most northerly county, has asked this government to open up more farmland within its boundaries and given that farmland like this would allow young, new families to start farms in a world where farms have become almost exclusively the domain of big business and family inheritance and given that the minister has already committed to working with all relevant partners, including impacted First Nations, to move forward with this request, can the minister update this House on the path forward to open up even more farmland in Alberta's north?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I was saying in my last question, we are at 15,000 acres left to go on that 136,000-acre promise. We anticipate that we should have that completed and moving forward in early 2022. We remain committed to looking for more agriculture land where appropriate while at the same time protecting large areas of the province that need to be conserved as a result of species or other issues that are taking place in a portion of northern Alberta. We will continue to work with First Nation communities, municipalities, and others that are impacted by these important land decisions inside the northern portion of our province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period.

In 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of Members' Statements.

2:40

Members' Statements

(continued)

Persons Case Day and Provincial Scholarship

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, October 18 marked the anniversary of the Persons Case in Canada. On this day in 1929 women were officially included in the legal definition of "persons" in Canada.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The story of the Persons Case began in 1922, when female activists proposed Emily Murphy, Canada's first female judge, for appointment to the Senate. However, it was the federal government's opinion that the British North America Act did not consider women as persons, and they could not be appointed to the Senate.

In 1927 the Famous Five – Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby – sent a petition to the Canadian government to refer the question to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada issued a unanimous ruling in 1928 that women were not considered to be persons under the British North America Act. Not to be deterred, the Famous Five decided to appeal the decision to the all-male Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England. After much deliberation the Privy Council reversed the decision of the Supreme Court. It concluded that "the word 'persons' . . . does include women, and that women are eligible to be summoned to and become members of the Senate of Canada." It is because of the work of the Famous Five that women are able to participate equally in all aspects of life today.

It is in the spirit of this that the Persons Case scholarship was created in 1979, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of this landmark decision. This scholarship supports students of all genders who are studying in the arts, humanities, or social sciences fields whose work advances gender equality. Those who are studying in these fields where their gender is underrepresented or disadvantaged are also eligible. Under this scholarship 40 students will receive \$2,500 each for their studies. The application deadline for the 2021-22 Persons Case scholarship is December 31.

I am proud that this scholarship continues to support the advancement of gender equality in Alberta and encourage all eligible individuals to apply.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Calgary Ward 4 Councillor Election Winner

Member Irwin: I was pleased to see many women elected to municipal councils and school boards last week. We now have majority women representation in Calgary, Edmonton, and Medicine Hat. We have the first woman elected mayor in Calgary in 137 years and the first in Medicine Hat as well. I'm so proud of every woman and gender diverse person who put their names forward across Alberta to run. It's no easy thing to do; in fact, it's very challenging. Politics, in many regards, is still very male dominated despite the progress we've made.

That's just one of the many, many reasons I'm so concerned about Calgary ward 4 councillor Sean Chu. It's come to light that during his time as a police officer, he inappropriately touched a 16-year-old girl. That's how it was described in the media, but let's be clear. She was a minor. Chu was a police officer in a position of authority. She could not consent. There is no debate. There are no two sides. We cannot have a sitting city councillor who has committed these reprehensible actions.

I want us to all think about the survivor. Think about her. Think about everything she's gone through. I want us to think about the progress we've made encouraging women to run for office and in making our governments more representative of all Albertans. This cuts directly against that, and it breaks my heart.

My message to Sean Chu is simple: resign; you must. My message to this government is to leave no stone unturned. This isn't a partisan issue. This is about the message it sends if a man like Sean Chu is allowed to continue in his role. Look for any and all options to remove him from office. I know the minister is getting further information about the legal options available, and I hope his intentions are genuine.

Albertans are watching. Young girls are watching. Some of them may be considering putting their names forward to serve in city hall, in parliament, or even right here in this Chamber. Do whatever it takes, and do the right thing.

Thank you.

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

Cystic Fibrosis Diagnosis and Treatment

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On September 12, 2017, at 4:32 a.m. my daughter was born. Shortly after her birth a small blood sample was taken and sent to a laboratory, where it would be screened for a number of different health conditions as part of the newborn screening process. My daughter's screen came back high, or positive, and my wife and I were told that more testing would be needed to determine if she had cystic fibrosis.

We learned that cystic fibrosis is caused by a mutation in the gene that modulates the flow of salt in and out of cells. As a result, the mucus produced to aid organ function becomes thick and glue-like. This thick mucus is continually produced, creating blockages that can build inside airways and cause severe breathing difficulty. People with cystic fibrosis can encounter severe organ function issues and potentially require frequent trips to the hospital to clear blockages.

After additional testing we were told that our daughter had been diagnosed with CFSPID, which stands for cystic fibrosis screen positive inconclusive diagnosis. This meant that she had a positive newborn screening result but did not yet meet all the criteria for a cystic fibrosis diagnosis. Children with CFSPID are expected to lead longer and healthier lives than those with cystic fibrosis, but it is not yet known if there is a risk of developing a CF-like disease later on in life. In my daughter's case the specialists are optimistic that she will not develop complications.

Our government recently announced that it would fund Trikafta, a life-changing drug for those with cystic fibrosis and their loved ones, even more broadly than was recommended by national drug reviews. Trikafta forces the defective gene to properly process salt and mucus, thus preventing blockages. Since cystic fibrosis is often detected in childhood, access to Trikafta beginning at age 12 will enable children with CF to begin treatment through adolescence. This will prevent most severe impacts of cystic fibrosis before adulthood.

On behalf of my constituents and all Albertans living with cystic fibrosis I would like to thank the ministers of Labour and Immigration and Health and everyone else involved in the development and approval of Trikafta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give notice that under Standing Order 42 at the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Alberta to publicly express its support for the National Police Federation, the union representing Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, employees, in opposing the government of Canada's policy requiring disclosure of the COVID-19 vaccination status of the employees of the federal public service, including members of the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, I have the 95 copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a notice of motion.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I intend to raise a point of privilege in regard to a misleading statement made by the Premier on June 16, 2021. I have the appropriate number of copies of the notice provided to your office prior to the deadline.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a notice of motion.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time under Standing Order 42 I intend to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to (a) acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic and specifically its fourth wave was made acutely worse by specific government decisions and actions and that, if different decisions were made, some deaths would have been preventable; (b) identify each government decision during the pandemic that failed to effectively manage the government's response, COVID-19 data and modelling, the lifting of regulatory restrictions, government's testing and contact tracing, government's communications to the public, and government's financial support to Albertans; and (c) take responsibility for its decisions and actions that resulted in Alberta having among the highest COVID-19 case counts and the highest COVID-19 death rate in the country during the fourth wave of the pandemic.

Be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly (a) immediately establish a select special committee consisting of all members of all caucuses with a mandate to examine the government's decisions and actions relating to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular those decisions and actions that resulted in a fourth wave of the pandemic occurring in Alberta; (b) confirm that this select special committee has the power to call for persons to give evidence before it or produce specified documents or things to it should the committee determine that such evidence, documents, or things are necessary for its deliberation; and (c) within 180 days of the committee being established require the select special committee to report to the Legislative Assembly on its findings and recommendations on how government can improve its current COVID-19 pandemic response and also improve its general pandemic planning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, as the COVID procedures inside the Chamber continue to develop and progress, if you would like a copy of any of the three notices of motions, please raise your hand, and the pages will be happy to deliver one. Having said that, additional copies will be provided at the tabling tables along with bills.

We're about to move to Introduction of Bills. Bills will only be handed out to those who raised their hands. Additional bills will be at the tabling tables.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 49 Labour Mobility Act

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave to introduce Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 49 read a first time]

Bill 73 Infrastructure Accountability Act

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to introduce the first reading of Bill 73, the Infrastructure Accountability Act, which is a key component for furthering Alberta's recovery plan as it provides accountability and transparency for how government invests in infrastructure projects that help build a prosperous province to keep people working.

The act also encourages businesses and job creators to invest and locate in Alberta by legislating a governance framework on the objective criteria to guide how capital projects and the spending are prioritized. These criteria will be open and accessible to everyone. It also mandates the development and release of a 20-year strategic capital plan, so I encourage members on both sides of the House to support this legislation.

I ask that we move first reading of Bill 73, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 73 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the government of Alberta's modelling from the summer, which covers a period from June 9, 2021, to September 15, 2021. This document is entitled *Shifting from Pandemic to Endemic* and was formally published on September 2, 2021. This is the modelling that the government stated it used to develop its open for summer and open for good plans.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling. In my capacity as chair of the Members' Services Committee and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table six copies of the following order approved at the October 18, 2021, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Members' Allowances Amendment Order (No. 37), being MSC Order No. 02/21. Copies of the orders have been and will be provided to all members.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Copping, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act the Alberta Health Services annual report 2020-21.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Madu, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2020 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I do have a couple of lengthy statements, so I would like to provide members the opportunity. Perhaps you have meetings coming up here in the next 10 minutes or so, and you might like to go to other places. I'll just provide an additional 30 seconds prior to making a couple of statements with respect to this session.

Statement by the Speaker

Deputy Government House Leader

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a couple of brief statements that I would like to make related to interventions as well as to the Deputy Government House Leader and the recent appointment of the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika as the Deputy Government House Leader.

Although this position typically has been held by a member of Executive Council, the standing orders are silent on the position of Deputy Government House Leader and a private member. This position, at least on one other occasion, has been appointed to this role. A former Member for Medicine Hat, Rob Renner, who was a private member at the time, was appointed as the Deputy Government House Leader during the spring session of 1999.

Although appointing a private member to the position is permissible in Alberta, there are certain functions that under the standing orders and by convention may only be performed by members of Executive Council. On February 17, 1999, Speaker Kowalski made a statement outlining the ruling and the functions that Mr. Renner could and could not perform as Deputy Government House Leader. This statement can be found at pages 20 and 21 of *Hansard* for that day.

To provide some clarity to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and indeed to all members of this Assembly, I would like to review the scope of the member's role as Deputy Government House Leader. In general, I share Speaker Kowalski's view that any activity that may be performed by the Government House Leader under our Standing Orders may be performed by the Deputy Government House Leader unless the standing orders provide that the activity may be undertaken by the Government House Leader or a member of Executive Council.

When the Standing Orders are silent as to who may do something, [in this respect] it is assumed that a private member can perform the function unless there is a convention or long-standing practice to the contrary.

Accordingly, a private member may as Deputy Government House Leader . . .

provide oral notice for government motions or government bills, on Thursdays may provide information to the Clerk concerning projected government business pursuant to Standing Order 8(2.1), and give notice to the Assembly of any written questions or motions for returns that will be accepted or otherwise dealt with on the following Monday, as referred to in Standing Order 34(3),

move second or third readings of government bills except bills requiring the royal recommendation as being money bills [under Standing Order 83] . . . and, if required move the motion that the [Assembly] resolve itself into Committee of Supply or Committee of the Whole.

Given the requirements in our Standing Orders and practices of this Assembly, there are certain things that may not be done by a private member . . .

in their role as Deputy Government House Leader because they must be done by a member of Executive Council. The following are some examples. A private member may not as Deputy Government House Leader move a motion appearing on the Order Paper under Government Motions, including a time allocation motion under Standing Order 21, or provide notice to the Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) that the daily Routine shall be continued past 3 o'clock or that the division on third reading of a government bill will be deferred in accordance with Standing Order 32.1(1)(a); comment, in accordance with Standing Order 42(1.2), on a request by a member of any opposition or an independent member to move a motion under Standing Order 42; reject, amend written questions or motions for returns in accordance with Standing Order 34; move a motion of supply resolution relating to a portion of the estimates under Standing Order 60(1); or move a motion under Standing Order 61(2) related to the consideration of interim supply and estimates by Committee of Supply; move that a bill introduced by a private member be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders pursuant to Standing Order 75; or move a motion under standing orders 74.1 or 78.1 to refer a bill to committee.

3:00

It's my hope that this list is comprehensive enough to address the matters that will concern the Assembly during this upcoming session.

I wish nothing but success to the hon. Deputy Government House Leader as he takes on his new, formal leadership role.

I also intend to make a statement on Standing Order 29.1, and that will then be followed by points of order and Notices of Motions.

Statement by the Speaker

Interventions

The Speaker: Hon. members, before this afternoon's proceedings I would like to point out that effective today the amendments made to the standing orders with the passage of Motion 518 this past June have come into force. Accordingly, the five-minute question-and-answer period under Standing Order 29(2) that was available following speeches on government business has been struck out, and in its place is Standing Order 29.1, which allows members to make short interventions during members' speeches in debate on government bills and motions and private bills with the permission of the member speaking.

This is a substantial change to the process of debate; accordingly, I feel it beneficial to provide some details on the record on how Standing Order 29.1 will apply. When a member is speaking in debate, another member may during the speech request to intervene by rising and, if necessary, asking the member if they will give way or words to that effect. The member speaking may agree to the intervention by giving way or may refuse the request by declining to cede the floor and continuing with their speech. If the member speaking refuses the request, the member requesting to intervene must take their seat.

However, if the member speaking agrees to the request, the member must sit down and allow the member making the intervention to speak without interruption. The member's speaking time will be paused until the intervention concludes. The member intervening may speak for only up to one minute, and once the intervention is complete, the member may resume their speech for the remainder of their speaking time. The table officers will set a

one-minute timer for the intervention, and the beeper will sound at the end of the one-minute period.

The member intervening may only ask questions or comments related to the speech on which they have intervened. The chair will stringently enforce Standing Order 23(b) to ensure that remarks by members making a speech are relevant to the bill or motion under discussion and that the intervenor's remarks relate specifically to the speech on which the intervention has been made.

There can be up to three interventions per speech, and a member may make multiple requests to intervene on the same speech. If a member accepts two or more interventions, an additional two minutes of speaking time will be added to the time remaining on the member's speech. Once three interventions have occurred during a speech, all members must refrain from requesting any additional interventions.

If a member indicates at any time during their speech that they do not intend to accept intervention requests, members should respect that decision and refrain from making such requests. Similarly, if a member speaking has repeatedly declined to permit interventions, members should refrain from continuing to rise to make requests for interventions as this could be seen as an attempt to interrupt or otherwise disrupt the member speaking.

Finally, requesting an intervention on a member who is making an intervention is not permitted.

Standing Order 29.1 applies to second and third reading debate on government bills and private bills as well as to government motions. It does not apply to the speech of the mover of a motion, the speech that immediately follows the mover of a motion, or a speech to close debate. Standing Order 29.1 also does not apply to the replies to the Speech from the Throne.

The member speaking, as opposed to the Speaker, decides if and from whom they will accept an intervention. However, according to Standing Order 29.1(8) the Speaker has a role to play to preserve order and decorum during the debate. Accordingly, members should be aware that the chair will interject during the intervention process if it is the chair's opinion that there is a need to do so.

Although the intervention process is not used in the House of Commons in Ottawa, interventions are commonplace in the House of Commons in the U.K. I would therefore urge members to review *Erskine May*, 25th edition, at paragraph 21.13, which describes expected etiquette for the intervention process and is as follows and is extremely important to your Speaker.

Members have the right to decide whether [they will] accept interventions on their speech from other Members, but once they have given way, the Member intervening has the right to speak. Members should not expect to make an intervention without having been present in the Chamber for a reasonable period [of time] during the debate; it is also [discourteous] to leave the Chamber shortly after making an intervention. A Member who has made an intervention should allow the Member who is making the speech time to respond before seeking to intervene further. A Member should not continue to stand in an attempt to intimidate a Member into giving way.

No doubt members are anxious to test out this new procedure. I look forward to seeing it in action.

We are at points of order. At 2:20 the Government House Leader raised a point of order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've got a lot before the House this afternoon; therefore, I'm going to withdraw this point of order.

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

We are at points of privilege. At Notices of Motions the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rose on a point of privilege.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on a point of privilege, as you mentioned. As you have said many times in this Chamber and re-emphasized in your procedural memorandum dated October 19, 2021, issues of privilege should arise infrequently in the Assembly, and they should arise infrequently because of the seriousness of the issue. It is deeply unfortunate that we have to address this issue today, on the first day back of this session.

Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege may be a bit lengthy, but the issue could not be more serious, and for you to rule on such a serious issue, the evidence must be laid out carefully and clearly. I will lay out a number of facts that lead me to conclude that the Premier and Member for Calgary-Lougheed misled this House on June 16, 2021.

With respect to the issue of privilege and contempt, you will find in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, chapter 3, page 82, where it speaks to breaches of privilege. There it states that it is a breach of privilege to deliberately attempt “to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).” Mr. Speaker, you will also find in *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, on page 254, section 15, misconduct of members or officers, under the heading Members Deliberately Misleading the House the following: “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in my notice of breach of privilege, I met the requirements of providing appropriate written notice as laid out in Standing Order 15(2). The standing order states, “A Member wishing to raise a question of privilege shall give written notice containing a brief statement of the question to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called into question, at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting.” You will see that the written notice that was provided was stamped by your office at 11 a.m. today, providing more than two hours’ required notice.

3:10

Therefore, allow me to lay out the facts at a high level on this issue before discussing the three-part test that you have consistently applied in these matters. This is the relevant test: to quote you, Mr. Speaker, from *Hansard*, page 1763, from July 7, 2020, that “is found in the fourth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*.”

As members of this Assembly know well, the issue of the government’s modelling and whether it is released publicly has been a matter of significant debate throughout the first, second, and third waves of this pandemic. The issue of modelling became all the more serious with the advent of the delta variant of COVID-19, the potential of a fourth wave, and a government decision to move to an endemic approach to managing this virus.

At the time the decisions were being made and publicly announced, there was no consensus on the way forward. On June 15, 2021, Dr. Theresa Tam, the chief public health officer of Canada, warned that her prior recommendation of 75 per cent first-dose coverage and 20 per cent double-dose coverage before safely removing any health restrictions needed to be reconsidered because of the delta variant.

But in Alberta we chose a different path. As all Albertans will know well, the government of Alberta spokespersons on COVID-19 have generally chosen their words very carefully. But on June 15, 2020, at the official media briefing and update on COVID-19, Dr. André Corriveau, deputy chief medical officer for health, was

at the podium, and Dr. Corriveau, in response to a media question, shared new information. He indicated that, in fact, the government was undertaking modelling related to the delta variant. This is the modelling that would ostensibly inform the government’s approach to the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, the government had repeatedly stated that they had no new modelling, so this official press conference was a revelation.

The following day, on June 16, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre asked the Premier about this. The member stated, “Yesterday we learned from the deputy chief medical officer of health that this government is in fact engaged in modelling of the highly contagious . . . COVID-19 delta variant and will have results this week.” The member then wrapped up his question by asking the Premier, “Will you commit here and now to releasing the delta . . . modelling to Albertans by the end of this week?” The Premier rose in response. “There is no delta variant modelling.” This exchange can be found on page 5591 of *Hansard* on that day.

Mr. Speaker, this response, in my view, constitutes a breach of privilege, and as I will demonstrate, the Premier was clearly attempting to deliberately mislead the House. We know this to be true because the government ultimately released its June delta wave modelling, that the Premier stated did not exist, and likewise admitted that their modelling got it very, very wrong.

In order for the Speaker to determine whether there was a breach of privilege, there is a three-part test that has been outlined by you in this House before. That three-part test can be found in *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, fourth edition, page 775 and 776. The three-part test is as follows: first, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; second, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House.

Furthermore, on pages 775 and 776 they also lay out the standard of proof required in order to meet this three-part test, and it is a standard of proof on balance of probabilities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, page 776 of that book also provides guidance on which matters are of sufficient importance to warrant consideration as matters of privilege. Let me quote. “The misleading of the House must not be concerned with a matter of no consequence, or such little consequence that it is too trivial to warrant the House’s attention.” Let me address this issue first, and I will do it briefly. I would suggest that the government’s response to the fourth wave and the information they had at their disposal to make their decision is certainly a matter of great consequence. Many Albertans became sick, and many lost their lives. Surgeries were postponed, and our health care system became so overwhelmed that we had to call in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Red Cross. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, I think all members would agree that, if proven true, deliberately misleading this Assembly on matters related to the COVID-19 crisis, a crisis that has shaped our society and way of life, is a matter of serious consequence.

Now let me turn to the first of the three-part test, that is: on the balance of probabilities was the Premier’s definitive statement that there was no delta variant modelling misleading? The answer is clearly yes because the government that this Premier leads ultimately released that modelling in a document entitled *Shifting from Pandemic to Endemic*. That document has been tabled in this Assembly earlier today and references the delta variant 18 times. It includes all of the 12 major modelling assumptions, it includes the 15 major modelling parameter values, it includes the model number of ICU and hospital admissions, and it includes a significant discussion on the effectiveness of vaccination rates against “the highly infectious Delta variant.” Simply put, this is the delta wave

modelling that the Premier stated at the time did not exist, and this is the modelling that proved so very wrong, as the Premier and the chief medical officer of health have now admitted. What is no longer in question, Mr. Speaker, is that this modelling existed at the time the Premier made his June 16 declaration in this House.

Now let me turn to the second part of the test. That is: on the balance of probabilities did the Premier know that the statement he was making was incorrect? Once again the answer is clearly yes. While the modelling data released by the government only states that it was developed in June, if you look carefully, it is clear that it was finished well before June 16, 2021. The key model parameter values found on page 5 employ data from April 25 to June 5 that are used to drive the projections, and on page 3 you will see that the modelling starts on June 9, 2021. More importantly, just two days after the Premier's remarks of June 16, he announced the open for summer plan with virtually all public health restrictions lifted. The Premier stated that we would have the best summer ever and we were, and I quote, open for good.

It is inconceivable in making this dramatic shift in the public health response that the Premier would not have had access to the modelling, modelling that the deputy chief medical officer of health was speaking to publicly in the media and modelling that the Premier and chief medical officer now admit was wrong, as they had explained in detail. All Albertans have heard the excuses. The modelling projected a decoupling of cases with hospitalization and ICU admissions that never transpired. Whether those modelling assumptions were warranted: that is a matter of debate for some other day, but for the purposes of this point of privilege what is clear is that the Premier had the modelling. Indeed, the reopening plan was announced in May, and the now-released modelling starts on June 9. The Premier's final announcement to reopen was on June 18. That announcement came with new slogans, new branding, and the list goes on.

3:20

At the press conference the then Minister of Health stated that we are, and I quote, moving from a pandemic to an endemic. End quote. The Premier, in response to a media question, was asked about his expectation on future cases. The Premier responded by saying, and I quote: people will get infected; some people will get sick; regrettably, a few people likely will pass away, as has been the case forever with influenza, but we don't shut down society to deal with that kind of limited and controllable risk; we manage the risk; the vaccine gave us a superpower to manage it; let's embrace that. End quote.

This is important to know, Mr. Speaker, because this is what the modelling stated at the time. This is exactly what the modelling was saying, that some people will continue to get sick, but the vaccination rate would result in a decoupling of cases and hospitalization and ICU admissions. To believe, on balance of probabilities, that somehow the Premier and the COVID-19 cabinet committee didn't have the modelling on June 16 or that they were unaware that it existed defies belief. Believing so would suggest that the entire machinery of government decision-making had collapsed and that key evidence was being kept from the Premier.

As a former minister of the Crown and a minister who was at the Fort McMurray fire emergency cabinet committee I know the level of details and information that get presented to decision-makers. Generally officials don't hold anything back. It is simply unimaginable that in a crisis like this the officials wouldn't share information on the delta variant in case projections as the government was planning to open up. Believing so defies all precedent, it defies logic, and it defies common sense. More importantly, there is not one shred of evidence to support the notion that modelling that this government ultimately released was not

shared with the Premier before he made his statement in this Assembly.

Finally, let me turn to the third part of the test. That is: on balance of probabilities did the member intend to mislead the House? Once again, Mr. Speaker, the answer is clearly yes. It is useful to remind this House of the Premier's word. He stated, "There is no delta variant modelling." Why would the Premier want to mislead the House with such a statement? On the balance of probabilities it seems self-evident. Acknowledging that modelling existed would have put pressure on the Premier to release it, and if he had released it, it would have raised questions on the Premier's open for summer plan.

Let us be clear. Not only did the modelling rest primarily on evidence from just one jurisdiction while ignoring hundreds of others; it made some pretty heroic assumptions, for example, that vaccine coverage was uniform across all geographic areas in Alberta; for example, that case detection would be the same going forward as during the other waves notwithstanding the Premier's move to end mass testing and dismantle the contact tracing system; or, for example, that the modelling would not account for Canada Day or Stampede despite the fact that two days after the Premier's June 15 remarks he announced that Alberta would be open for Canada Day.

I won't go through every assumption, but if that modelling was public at the time, people would've questioned the Premier's plan, and it might have derailed his open for summer strategy. On balance of probabilities it is clear that the Premier didn't want people to know that the modelling existed at that time. It was only after things got out of control that senior members of the government even admitted that the modelling existed, and thereafter it took weeks for the government to release it publicly.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion and in my view, the Premier's remarks in the House were a clear and serious breach of privilege. It was wrong to state that there was no delta wave modelling, and what is so rare in this circumstance is that the evidence that the modelling did in fact exist at that time came directly from the government when they released it publicly on September 2, 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, points of privilege are serious matters. As such, the Assembly has a long tradition of allowing members or those who would like to reply to the point of privilege some time in which to do so. I'll offer the Government House Leader that opportunity. I'm not sure if he chooses to respond today or tomorrow.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Tomorrow.

The Speaker: You'd like to respond tomorrow.

Are there other members who would like to respond today or tomorrow?

Seeing none, I will be happy to hear arguments from the Government House Leader tomorrow to this important point of privilege.

Thank you for bringing it to the Assembly.

I also understand that the associate minister of multiculturalism has a very brief request for unanimous consent, and I'm happy to hear that now.

Mr. Yaseen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request the unanimous consent of this Assembly to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 212, Official Sport of Alberta Act, to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: We will now proceed to the Standing Order 42 request that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat made during Notices of Motions.

Federal Public Service COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've read it into the record once, I will not do so again. First, pursuant to Standing Order 42 I have provided members of the Assembly with the appropriate number of copies. While a motion under section 42 does not require notice, I understand that my office provided advance notice to the Speaker, the government, and the opposition of my intent to introduce this urgent motion under the appropriate standing order. The provision of Standing Order 42 is to provide the opportunity to ensure we address matters that are of importance to constituents that are debated and addressed in this House. This is a matter of utmost importance as there will be dire consequences for rural Albertans if a plan is not put into place soon.

I rise today to ask for unanimous consent of the Assembly on a matter of urgent importance for the safety of all rural Albertans and their families. Between now and Christmas an unknown number of Alberta's RCMP members face imminent layoffs or indefinite suspensions without pay due to the Liberal government's vaccine mandates. The legality of such punitive measures will most certainly be challenged in court, which is also a matter of fulsome debate in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, the union representing RCMP officers says that it will support members' choice to be vaccinated or not against COVID-19 following this federal order. The president of the RCMP's union, the National Police Federation, which represents some 20,000 members, said, and I quote: as we have maintained through 2021, consistent with our duty of fair representation, the NPF will continue to support members' access to vaccines and their choice to be vaccinated or not. Unquote.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that there's a third category, those that choose vaccination but oppose mandates like these that segregate Alberta. To quote federal MP Leslyn Lewis:

It's misguided to assume that those who stand up for medical privacy aren't vaccinated. Canadian Law has long established the importance of medical privacy, and many Canadians, vaccinated and unvaccinated alike, are united in the fight to uphold democracy and freedoms.

The union has also actively worked to encourage vaccination, with the RCMP's own chief medical officer stating, quote, it's like body armour or a seat belt for your lungs; it's not a guarantee that you will never get sick, but if you do, it's the reason you'll survive. Unquote.

Mr. Speaker, there also must be a level of recognition that there are towns in Alberta that are already understaffed due to limited resources, and as we know, as we've debated in this very House, this has already led to an explosion in the crime rate for rural Albertans. Rural crime is already off the charts. Now imagine the consequences this change will have on rural communities. I am sure many of my rural counterparts know first-hand that they represent communities with only a handful of officers serving a big area and that losing just one officer would have enormous consequences. If you take one police officer out of a 20-officer detachment, it is possible to adapt, but if you take one officer out of a two-member detachment, you cannot. It's impossible. Meanwhile, when we talk to the affected RCMP workers directly, we are getting a dire prognosis. Given that this passport mandate deadline is only a few

weeks away, we know it would be irresponsible to proceed. Albertans need a plan from this government.

Now, there are a variety of measures we could take to reduce the impact of vaccine mandates when it comes to the job losses and the service disruptions. We can and should delay any job losses under plans that are put in place to ensure service continuity in rural regions, the same way Ontario and AHS delayed things. In addition, there is no question in my mind that we should accept antibody testing alongside rapid tests in order for employees to comply with vaccine mandates. Mr. Speaker, the natural immunity acquired by Albertans should not be ignored. In addition, the province of Alberta could and should offer to pay for both rapid tests.

I'm calling for many more options. Let's get this job done.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 42(1) it provides up to five minutes for the Government House Leader or a member of Executive Council to respond to the request for unanimous consent.

The hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for bringing this issue forward to the Chamber today. I will refer him to Government Motion 100, which I do anticipate will be debated on maybe today if the House gives unanimous consent for it to be debated on – if not, tomorrow – which will lay out a process to have a very significant COVID-19 debate inside this Chamber. I would suggest to the hon. member that that is the best spot for him to be able to bring that forward, to ask his questions in regard to this issue, and to make his concerns known to this Chamber. I will not be providing consent for this motion today given that it's on one issue. I think there are multiple issues in regard to COVID-19 that need to be discussed in front of this Chamber, and therefore we will proceed with Government Motion 100. I do encourage the member to participate in that process and support that important motion that will be before this Chamber.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent to set aside the ordinary business of the day to proceed immediately to the motion as moved by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We will now proceed to the request for unanimous consent under Standing Order 42 as provided by the Opposition House Leader.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising under Standing Order 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion in regard to a matter that is very urgent and pressing. Now, I have already read what is a lengthy motion under Notices of Motions, so I will not repeat reading that, but I do want to acknowledge that I've provided members of the Assembly with the appropriate number of copies, and I've provided your office notice of my intention to move this motion.

I'll speak very briefly to why this motion is urgent and pressing. This is a debate. Should unanimous consent be granted, this would be a course of action that Albertans deserve. Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic the UCP government has chosen a path of acting least and last and never following the timely advice of health experts. Cancelling contact tracing, no paid sick leave, no support for effective

Allard	Luan	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Ellis	Neudorf	Shandro
Fir	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Frey	Orr	Stephan
Getson	Pon	Toor
Glubish	Rehn	Williams
Guthrie	Reid	Yao
Issik	Rowswell	Yaseen
LaGrange		

Against the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Nielsen	Renaud	

Totals: For – 31 Against – 8

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:00

Bill 218

Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries) Amendment Act, 2021

[Adjourned debate June 14: Mr. Schow]

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

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

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

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rutherford
Allard	Luan	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Ellis	Neudorf	Shandro
Fir	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Frey	Orr	Stephan
Getson	Pon	Toor
Glubish	Rehn	Williams
Guthrie	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Rowswell	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Nielsen	Renaud	

Totals: For – 30 Against – 8

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 219

Workers' Compensation (Expanding Presumptive Coverage) Amendment Act, 2021

[Adjourned debate June 14: Mr. Williams]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:17 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Luan	Sawhney
Allard	Madu	Schow
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Neudorf	Shandro
Ellis	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Frey	Orr	Stephan
Getson	Pon	Toor
Glubish	Rehn	Williams
Guthrie	Reid	Yao
LaGrange	Rowswell	Yaseen
Lovely	Rutherford	

Against the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.
Nielsen	Renaud	

Totals: For – 29 Against – 8

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 207

Reservists' Recognition Day Act

The Chair: We are on amendment A1. Any members wishing to join debate? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise again on Bill 207 and on the amendment here in Committee of the Whole. As I've expressed previously, reservists are an important part of the Canadian Armed Forces. There are 143 units through over 100 communities across Canada that make up the reservists force in our country. As many in this House know, reservists are unique as they hold regular civilian jobs or they're in schooling as well as their role in the reserves. This requires reservists to serve in the communities near their jobs or their schooling, and they often have to serve on evenings, on weekdays, and on weekends as well. Yet for many reservists that I know and engage with the extra time serving is not work; it is a civic duty that they feel. And not only do they get to serve their country, but often they're utilized close to home in forest fires or in floods or other natural disasters. We've seen that here in Alberta with forest fires and floods as well as their response to COVID-19, which has seen the military deployed across the country to various extents.

To express our gratitude to our reservists for everything that they do in protecting our province, our country, and sovereignty, both near and far, and to highlight the different roles that are within

reservists and to recognize the unique circumstances for which they serve, to say thank you, and to highlight, again, that incredible skill set that they develop and what an opportunity it is to employers – so another aspect of this is to try to make sure that employers understand the skill set that reservists develop in their leadership, discipline, and teamwork and what that value is. An employer is going to have to recognize that a reservist is going to be away at times for training or deployment but that there is also a benefit to that.

I believe that this bill, along with this amendment before the House, is a gesture of appreciation that will hopefully make it easier for reservists to serve our great province and country by reducing the period of employment to 12 weeks from 26 weeks, that reservists can have the opportunity to utilize their skills faster. There is an imperative to reduce these barriers to get that assistance.

As my colleague from Peace River noted when this debate was adjourned in June, this amendment aligns with federal guidelines, would be another step for Alberta to be an attractive place for Canadians to join the reserves, and also line up with the federal policy in an attempt to increase the amount of reservists that are currently serving.

When I was in the Edmonton Police Service, I worked with reservists who balanced both that job, which is four on, four off shift work, plus reserves, and they did a fantastic job doing that. In addition to that, they were actually living in my riding of Leduc-Beaumont, but of course reservists reside in every riding, I think, across this province, with reservists based in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer.

In highlighting what reservists do – I've touched on this before – one of the things that I like to touch on as well is that they're part of the Rangers patrol group. The Rangers are within the reservists. They are responsible for Canada's four western provinces, and they report directly to 3rd Canadian division. The Rangers engage in patrols for national security and public safety purposes. Their patrols are normally conducted in remote areas with sparse populations. Part of their responsibility is conducting search and rescue operations, which they have done several times in Alberta. The Canadian Rangers are just one aspect of our robust reserve contingency in Alberta. Of course, there are the primary reserves, the cadets, and the supplementary reserves.

Just to highlight, you know, the cadets especially, I've had a chance to speak to the cadets in Beaumont and learn more about what they do. It's something I now regret not doing myself. It is a great opportunity for youth in Canada to join that program, learn military values while learning about leadership and teamwork. Sea cadets, for example, learn about navigation and how to sail. Army cadets participate in expeditions, orienteering, and trekking. And, of course, the air cadets focus on aviation-related activities, including flying, gliding, and other studies in aerospace.

Before I yield my time to the chair, Madam Chair, I'd just like to highlight the continued work of the Alberta government in supporting our military community, and of course that would include the reservists. We've had an opportunity to support HIMARC, which is the Heroes in Mind, Advocacy and Research Consortium, in getting them grant funding to support mental health research with their 3 MDR program. I was fortunate enough to be able to watch a therapy session with one of the veterans, who described it as a 10 to 1 experience compared to talk therapy.

4:40

I think it's an important aspect, to be able to recognize how veterans and other people within the military view the therapy that they're provided and the options that they have to treat PTSD. The more successful it is, the more likely they're going to want to

participate, but of course they're going to be talking to other people through peer-to-peer support groups and other avenues for which to promote this kind of therapy. Hopefully that treatment is successful for them and becomes a more viable option as we go forward.

Homes for Heroes. Folks in Calgary are going to know that one of the first projects for Homes for Heroes in Calgary was a veterans' transitional housing village, which has been quite successful, and we were able to provide funding from the Alberta government for one in Edmonton. That included support from other stakeholders, including municipalities as well who stepped up to do that, as well as the Alex Decoteau award of honour supporting members with a grant for postsecondary studies, the family members of those who have been killed or for the member themselves if they are disabled in overseas deployment or in training as well.

The veteran-friendly campus initiative – that's a newer one – is there to support veterans as they transition from military life to academic life. Some will know that after a certain period of time in the military, six years, you get around \$40,000 towards postsecondary education; after 12 years it's around \$80,000. This initiative was to help support those veterans who utilize those funds in postsecondary, to provide support groups and peer support groups, mentorship, mental health supports, really create a community on campus that would support the veteran in that transition.

These are all just ways to say thank you, ways to support our military community and to make sure that their work is recognized – we are trying to make it a little bit easier to be in the military for both the member, the veteran, and the families as well – and also, with the amendment of this bill, that I hope gets support, to help with the leave requirement, which will make it easier for reservists to have an opportunity to deploy if they are called upon.

Of course, we know that when they are going to be called upon is an unknown. We don't know when there's going to be a natural disaster. You can kind of predict the time frame of it, but you never know what year it's going to be. Calgary didn't know it was going to be them, and Fort McMurray was the same way, but of course B.C. has forest fires and so does Quebec and Ontario, other provinces, other First Nations groups. Those are through Operation Lentus and Operation Laser. One is around natural disaster deployment, and the second is actually the response to COVID-19. I appreciate all the work that they have done and all the support they have given this province currently and in the past and across this country. I hope everybody supports this amendment and supports reservists just a little bit more.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Absolutely. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon for the first time in the fall session to talk about Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and of course the amendment that's also in front of the Assembly. You know, listening intently, of course, to the sponsor's comments, I'll start by first saying thank you for bringing this bill forward. It's always nice to be able to show recognition for those that go above and beyond to protect our society and make our society better, things like that.

Of course, I'd be very, very remiss if I didn't take the opportunity, Madam Chair, to thank some other heroes that reside in our society, and that's, you know, our front-line health care workers, who are working day in and day-night trying to keep Albertans safe, trying to make them healthy and keep them alive; our first responders, who are the first ones that show up on the scenes when people dial 911 and are looking for help; and, quite

honestly, all of the front-line workers that are contributing in their ways to try to keep Albertans safe from cleaning rooms to preparing meals to working in the warehouses to making sure people have the supplies they need in the stores. The store clerks, cashiers, all of the above: I would be remiss if we didn't thank those individuals for all of the hard work that they are clearly doing for our society.

But back to Bill 207 and, of course, amendment A1. You know, we seem to have a little bit of a slow start here today trying to talk about private members' business, something that the Government House Leader was very, very excited about getting to today, yet we seem to be adjourning bills that would, for instance, help seniors. I know that reservists' parents are seniors, so I'm sure that they would have something to say about the care that they receive and, when they do run into any problems, having an advocate to work on their behalf.

I did hear comments around PTSD. It's funny that we adjourned debate on a bill that would have addressed that specific thing around PTSD that reservists are very, very much struggling with because of the duties that come with what they do, be it either with action in the field or natural disasters. Those things can take a very, very big toll on an individual. As they say, while the rest of us are running away, they're running towards it. You know, I'm sure that some of our reservists would have had some things to say about those had we had the opportunity to maybe be able to discuss those.

When I'm looking at Bill 207, you know, as I said, I'm in support of this bill. Even though I realize that when we recognize our regular forces service members, reservists are also recognized at the same time, I don't necessarily see a problem with having a specific time to be able to recognize those individuals.

I know that when I was looking at amendment A1 – and I never had the chance to ask this question before the last session ended. It was around section 2 and section 53.2, amending 26 weeks to 12 weeks. I certainly don't actually have a problem with that, but I know that with some of the members that served in the 29th Legislature that are within the government benches and within the government caucus, there was always, shall we say, some push-back whenever we tried to give workers some advantages. So I wanted to ask: what kind of feedback was received from employers when, you know, this amendment was considered, and what kind of concerns did they have about extending that time?

Again, I myself actually don't have a problem with it. I think that they deserve that, they need that, and it will help promote more people to be able to join the reservists and be able to help our communities as they do. Hopefully, maybe we'll get a chance to explore that a little bit and what kind of feedback was heard about that.

As an individual that represents a riding that's very, very close to the Namao base, along with my colleagues in Edmonton-Castle Downs and Edmonton-Manning, we have a lot of our family members that serve both as regular forces service members and reservists. You know, I'm not going to say that I haven't heard one or two people say, "Hey, it would be great to have a special day", but I guess I'm wondering, you know: what kinds of effects are we going to see from the government? I would never presuppose a decision of the House, but hopefully this will be proclaimed and it will go through. What kinds of things will the government hopefully step up and do for them besides simply creating a time to recognize them?

You know, I know one of the things that the former NDP government did was to recognize the vehicle training for reservists so that they would also be recognized as commercial drivers when they were no longer in the reserves. I'm hoping that this will spark some tangible results that will work towards the benefit of reservists and the time that they put in there.

When we're talking a little bit about PTSD and things like that, I'm hoping that this will highlight even further the need for wraparound services for not only our regular forces members but our reservists as well. When we were talking earlier about PTSD, it's not just enough to say: "Well, you know what? I mean, here's a program that you can maybe go talk to somebody for a couple of days, and hopefully that'll do." You know, we've clearly seen, unfortunately, in the past that federal governments, quite honestly, haven't supported our regular service members, our reservists that come back from fields of combat. We should have done better when asking people to go into harm's way to be able to step up and have their backs once they return home.

4:50

I know that the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont was mentioning Homes for Heroes. Of course, that's going up currently here in Edmonton in my very own riding of Edmonton-Decore. I was very happy to be able to speak in favour of that to city council, the benefits that a project like that was going to create and even the community service. You know, these members that will be going through this program will then be available to my home neighbourhood of Evansdale and even the surrounding communities because we know just how dedicated reservists and regular service members are. When it comes to their duties, they become very, very strong and dedicated volunteers within the community.

If we can get these individuals that participate in this program back on their feet and allow them to be able to once again serve in our communities, that's never ever a bad thing at all. I'm very, very excited about this project. It's coming along very, very nicely, by the way. I'm just itching to try to get even a tour of it partway through, but I haven't had a chance to really organize that. The good news is that the money – you know, I also indeed helped to push the government to invest in that project – is coming together very, very nicely. I try to drive by it at least a couple of times a week to check on its progress.

You know, one of the other things that I think is important to reservists is things like child care. You can't go and complete your duties as a reservist if you may be facing child care issues. My hope is that the government will move very, very quickly in collaboration with the federal government to get a program in place. It's very, very disconcerting that just about every other jurisdiction has managed to get this done, yet here in Alberta we haven't had that opportunity to be able to offer that to things like our reservists.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise in the Assembly for the first time in the fall sitting and speak to Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and more specifically to the amendment. As we know, this bill proposes to recognize Alberta military reservists on the last Saturday of September each year. I have personal connections, actually, multiple family members that have served in the reserves in the past and presently here in Alberta, so I'm truly honoured to speak this afternoon to the bill and to the amendment.

Madam Chair, Alberta is home to over 20 reserve units, including the 41 Canadian Brigade Group of the Canadian Army; 4 Wing, Cold Lake; and 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Yes, even the navy can be found here in Alberta, I was surprised to learn, represented by HMCS *Nonsuch* and HMCS *Tecumseh*. These units are comprised of Albertan men and women who serve in their spare time to keep Canadians safe and to defend our rights and freedoms. These are everyday

Albertans – teachers, doctors, lawyers, trades workers, construction workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbours – who sacrifice their free time, time with their loved ones and their families, to keep our country and our province free and secure.

As I've already mentioned, these brave people sacrifice so much of their personal time, and there are so many reasons they could choose not to be part of the military and specifically part of the reserves. But their courage knows no bounds, and we're so grateful that they do serve in this capacity. As I've already mentioned, we don't have a way of repaying these individuals directly for what they do and what they provide, that backstop that they provide to our military, but we can do our best to make things easier on them. One way is through this amendment, looking at making a change to the current format of the reservist leave. Currently reservist leave allows for military members to take time off work without the risk of losing their job. Employers have to grant this, and it's ensured that they have . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but according to Standing Order 8(6) the committee will now rise and report without question put.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 207. 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 Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? If so, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: If no, please say nay. In my opinion, the ayes have it. That motion is carried and so ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Chamber in order to revert to Government Motions for the remainder of the afternoon.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Morning Sittings

96. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) and for the duration of the 2021 fall sitting of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature the Assembly must meet to consider government business on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings unless, during Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or before the Assembly adjourns on a sitting day, the Government House Leader advises the Assembly of the morning sittings that are no longer required.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) this motion is not debatable.

[Government Motion 96 carried]

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I do rise right now to advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting tomorrow, Tuesday, October 26, 2021.

Evening Sittings

97. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) and for the duration of the 2021 fall sitting of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature the Assembly must meet to consider government business on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings unless, during Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or before 6 p.m. on a sitting day, the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that no evening sitting is required on that sitting day.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 97 carried]

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting required tonight.

Committee Membership Changes

98. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:

- (a) on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Mr. Rowswell replace Mr. Orr as chair and Mrs. Allard replace Mr. Orr, Mr. Jones replace Mr. Rowswell as deputy chair, Mr. Hunter replace Ms Issik, and Mr. Rehn replace Mr. Yaseen;
- (b) on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Mr. Rutherford replace Mr. Schow as chair and Mr. Long replace Mr. Schow, Mr. Milliken replace Mr. Sigurdson as deputy chair and Mr. Milliken replace Mr. Sigurdson, Mrs. Allard replace Ms Lovely, and Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Yaseen;

5:00

- (c) on the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills that Mr. Rutherford replace Mr. Ellis as chair and Mr. Long replace Mr. Ellis, Mr. Jeremy Nixon replace Mr. Schow as deputy chair and Mr. Jeremy Nixon replace Mr. Schow, Ms Rosin replace Mr. Getson, and Mr. Rehn replace Mr. Sigurdson;
- (d) on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing that Mrs. Aheer replace Mr. Jones and Mr. Stephan replace Ms Lovely;
- (e) on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Reid replace Mr. Guthrie as deputy chair and Mr. Reid replace Mr. Guthrie and Mr. Toor replace Mr. Neudorf;
- (f) on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Mr. Schow replace Mr. Ellis as deputy chair and Mr. Schow replace Mr. Ellis and that Mrs. Allard be appointed;
- (g) on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Mrs. Frey replace Mr. Reid;
- (h) on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Ms Lovely be appointed chair, Mr.

Reid replace Mr. Rutherford, and that Mr. Hunter be appointed;

- (i) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Ms Lovely replace Ms Issik and Mr. Yao replace Mr. Yaseen;
- (j) on the Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights that Mr. van Dijken replace Mr. Orr and that Mr. Yao be appointed;
- (k) on the Select Special Child and Youth Advocate Search Committee that Mr. Turton replace Ms Fir.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(h) this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone who wishes to add questions, comments to Government Motion 98?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 98 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Amendments to Standing Orders

99. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

- A. Be it resolved that temporary amendments be made to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective July 1, 2021, as follows:
 - (a) Standing Order 3 is amended
 - (i) in suborder (4) by striking out “(8) or (9)” and substituting “(8), (9) or (10)”, and
 - (ii) by adding the following after suborder (9):
 - (10) Subject to suborder (12), the Speaker may extend a period of adjournment in accordance with suborder (11) if the Speaker is satisfied that either of the following applies:
 - (a) the Assembly should not meet on that specific date or time due to an emergency event;
 - (b) it is in the public interest for the period of adjournment to be extended.
 - (11) After consulting with the Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader, the Speaker may extend an adjournment by,
 - (a) specifying the date and time until which the adjournment is extended, and
 - (b) providing notice of that date and time that the Assembly must next meet to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that date and time.
 - (12) A period of adjournment extended under suborder (11) may be superseded by subsequent notification from the Government under suborder (8) that the Assembly must meet.
- B. Be it further resolved that the temporary amendments in this motion come into force on passage and expire at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, February 7, 2022.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(j). Are there any members wishing to speak?

[Government Motion 99 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Legislative Assembly Debate on COVID-19

100. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

- A. Be it resolved that despite any standing order and given the urgent public importance of the COVID-19 pandemic the Assembly debate the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to all relevant matters arising since the Assembly’s most recent debate on this matter on May 27, 2020;
- B. And be it further resolved that the Assembly debate the matter referred to in part A commencing on a date set by the Government House Leader in consultation with the Official Opposition House Leader that is no later than November 4, 2021, of which the Government House Leader must provide notice to the Assembly under Notices of Motions during the daily Routine on the day immediately preceding that date.
- C. And be it further resolved that the Assembly debate the matter referred to in part A as follows:
 - (a) the Premier may make the first statement not exceeding 30 minutes;
 - (b) immediately following the Premier’s statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition may make a statement not exceeding 15 minutes;
 - (c) immediately following the Leader of the Official Opposition’s statement and for a period not exceeding 30 minutes
 - (i) the Leader of the Official Opposition may ask questions on matters relevant to the Premier’s statement or the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
 - (ii) the Premier or any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
 - (d) immediately following the question and response period referred to in clause (c), the Minister of Health may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
 - (e) immediately following the Minister of Health’s statement and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes
 - (i) members who are not a member of Executive Council may ask questions on matters relevant to the statement or the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
 - (ii) any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
 - (f) any member of Executive Council may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
 - (g) immediately following each statement made by a member of Executive Council and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes
 - (i) any member who is not a member of Executive Council may ask questions on matters relevant to the statement or the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
 - (ii) any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
 - (h) a member who asks a question or a member of Executive Council who responds in accordance with clause (c), (e), or (g) is limited to a period of two minutes at one time to ask that question or make a response;
 - (i) immediately after all statements and related periods for questions and responses have concluded, the debate is

considered to have been concluded by the Assembly without decision.

- D. And be it further resolved, for greater clarity, the debate may be adjourned at any time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18. Are there others wishing to join the debate? I see the Deputy Opposition House Leader has risen.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I am quite disappointed in this motion. I think that we have seen very clearly today that this government is not serious about taking reflection and review of the incompetence that has led to so many deaths and the rise and surge of the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's very clear to me that this is inadequate as a mechanism to review the significant public health crisis that has come upon this province and across the entire planet, of course. It's also very clear to me, simply looking at the rules and framework put in place by the Government House Leader here, simply looking at the framework being proposed, that it would be nothing remotely resembling the thoroughness of an all-party committee. It would be nothing remotely resembling the proper scrutiny that is deserved for all Albertans to understand what happened during the pandemic, what is happening during the pandemic. We need to have a public review of those measures.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what this government is doing – and I know that the Government House Leader wants to get up and say that it's grandstanding, that it's politics. To be clear, it is nothing of the sort. To be very clear, it is trying to bring accountability and justice for those who have been impacted by COVID-19. It's trying to bring accountability and justice for the thousands of people who had their life-saving surgeries cancelled, for businesses who continue to struggle under this government's failures, for the health care workers who are struggling every day still, relying on federal aid and military help in our overwhelmed hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we called for an actual committee to review this process, for an actual public review of the pandemic management, to see what mistakes were made and to shine a light on how decisions were made by this government caucus and government cabinet. We know – we know – through the public postings of members of this place, in their newsletters, that this government caucus interfered and meddled with the recommendations of the medical officer of health. We know that Dr. Hinshaw's recommendations were not followed by this government. The only reason we know that is because members of the UCP caucus made those statements publicly. So we need to have a thorough review that understands when and why these transgressions happened. We need to understand when and why more than 86,000 Albertans have been infected with COVID-19 and thousands of Albertans have died.

5:10

It is, frankly, shocking to see these types of numbers. It's, frankly, shocking to see a government not willing to review the process in which they make decisions. It's, frankly, shocking to see a government scared and running away from accountability. To propose only a mere short time for a few ministers to answer three or four questions in this House, Mr. Speaker: that is an affront to our democratic process. That is an attack on accountability. It simply does not make sense. It is simply offensive to all of those people who have suffered and continue to suffer.

We know right now that this government is in shambles. We know that this government continues to flounder and not have a

thorough understanding of what direction we should be going. We know that this government does not have the willpower to actually go out and make decisions that would improve the lives of Albertans.

But what Albertans need to know through a public review, through a proper committee review process, which this government denied, which this government voted against in this place when we requested the consent of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans deserve is more than the talking points we're going to get from these ministers, is more than the key messages we're going to get from these ministers on how we should suck it up and celebrate the best summer ever. That's what Albertans deserve.

Instead, we see the fourth wave continue to surge; like I said, over 86,000 people infected during this fourth wave. Thousands of Albertans have been dying. Mr. Speaker, we need to understand why government policy has led to this. We need to understand how and why government policy has led to this substantial damage to lives, livelihoods all across Alberta. We need to understand why this government continues to make these decisions, continues to drag their heels on COVID-19 precautions, continues to ignore and overrule the advice of the chief medical officer of health, continues to make all these types of decisions that, frankly, are why this government does not seem to have any direction.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I think that we can at least try and make this very terrible motion a little bit better. We can at least try to have a process that would guarantee that ministers would come here – right now we don't have that guarantee – and it would at least try and give a respectable amount of time for questions and answers. Right now, of course, the motion only requires the Minister of Health to make a 15-minute statement and then, basically, a very short question-and-answer period, which would result in only a few questions. I think that's something that's ridiculous.

Whether they are a government member, a government backbencher, somebody that's been passed over for cabinet, or if they're an opposition member or an independent member, I think every member of this place should have the opportunity to ask ministers questions and should have the opportunity to ask more than one or two questions. I think that we should all have the opportunity in this place to ensure that we have a thorough understanding of what's happening in this pandemic and why decisions are being made the way they are.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do have an amendment that I'll send to the table now.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this amendment will be referred to as amendment A1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South still has the call.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Government Motion 100 be amended in part C as follows: (a) in clause (d) by striking out "may" and substituting "must"; (b) in clause (e) by striking out "15 minutes" and substituting "50 minutes"; (c) in clause (f) by striking out "any member of Executive Council may" and substituting "each member of Executive Council, other than the Premier and Minister of Health, must"; and (d) in clause (g) by striking out "15 minutes" and substituting "50 minutes."

Mr. Speaker, I think it's a pretty straightforward amendment. I think it's an amendment that empowers this Legislature and allows members to have the due respect in this process to be able to properly question ministers. Frankly, I think it's insulting. It's insulting to both government backbenchers, the ones who have been passed over for cabinet over and over again. It's insulting to those backbenchers. It's insulting to the opposition. It's insulting to

the independents. It's insulting to this democratic institution that the government would choose to have such a short question-and-answer period, would choose to have such a short section allotted, and would choose to have so few ministers be required to present to this place.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications across the entire province, right? We know it affected industries such as child care. We know, of course, it affects health care. It affected education. We saw the government lay off thousands of educational workers at the beginning of the pandemic. We saw the government continue to drag their heels on affordable child care, which is something that is going to be an impact on getting people back to work. We see the government continue to provide basically no supports for workers. Right now, of course, there's not even guaranteed paid sick leave in Alberta. We see this government continue to provide no supports to businesses. There is no commercial rent protection for evictions.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are so many ministries that are impacted by this. We know that there are so many parts of the Alberta economy and Albertans that are impacted by the pandemic, and to not allow every single minister to be questioned, to not provide every single minister to be questioned in this place, I think, is insulting. I think it's better than nothing. It is not, obviously, going to be as thorough as a proper committee review. It's not going to allow us to fully shine a light on the decisions that are being made by the Premier and this cabinet. It's not going to allow us to fully understand why CMOH decisions continue to be overruled by this caucus, but at least it would allow some accountability because we would have sufficient time to question every single minister, right? I think that's something that's important. I think it's important that in our democracy we have the opportunity to ask every single minister questions.

Of course, I think that every single government backbencher, the ones who aren't in cabinet, the ones who aren't – I mean, nearly half of the caucus is in cabinet at this point. But the ones who remain out of cabinet for whatever reason, one or another: Mr. Speaker, I think those members should have the opportunity to question the other half of their caucus, right? I think that's something that's very fair and reasonable. I know the opposition would certainly want this opportunity. I hope the independents would like to join us in that.

But when we look at the type of work that will be done in Government Motion 100, the type of work that this questioning period in the Legislature will do, we just know it's not going to be as powerful as a proper committee would have been. We won't be able to compel political staff. We won't be able to compel witnesses. We won't be able to compel documents from ministries that will explain some of these key decisions. We won't be able to see the information that will explain what modelling led to the open-for-summer plan, which caused this massive surge in cases over the fourth wave. We won't be able to see the information that this government was using when they decided to overrule the CMOH on the vaccine passport program.

We know that all of these things happened, either through leaks in the media or government backbenchers, the ones who aren't in cabinet, publishing them in newsletters, Mr. Speaker. We know all of these things continue to happen across the province. For the half of caucus that isn't in cabinet in the UCP backbench, I think they should be demanding these answers, too. I think they should be interested in these answers as well.

I know the opposition is trying to stand up for Albertans and find out what happened. I know that there are millions of Albertans out there who agree with us. There are millions of Albertans right now who want to know what this government is doing. They want to know

why this government is doing what they do, why this government is making, in many ways, boneheaded decisions, but instead, Mr. Speaker, if we don't accept this amendment, we're going to see a process that is going to last maybe a little over three hours or a little less than three hours, some sort of quick question and answer, a couple questions to a couple ministers. That's going to be the whole process.

That's not democracy in action, right? That's not what Albertans were promised when they voted in a strong and free government. Instead, we have half of the UCP caucus who are sitting on the backbench, not questioning the government. We have the other half of the caucus in cabinet, and, Mr. Speaker, the rest of the time all we see is a bunch of leaks on how cabinet and caucus are not listening to the expert advice.

5:20

Really, we do need to have a proper process in place, we do need to review the decisions being made by this government, we do need to understand what is happening in terms of this pandemic, and Albertans, again, deserve to know. Albertans deserve to have these answers. Albertans deserve to have explanations as to why the Minister of Health laid off so many education workers, why the Minister of Health reopened schools without any plans to keep students and staff safe, why the Minister of Education went so far in reopening schools and then was forced to bring in some measures but didn't provide any supports for those measures, right? Albertans deserve the answers on what modelling brought this up, what advice was given to the minister in these aspects.

Instead, we see a minister who basically disappeared for weeks. We see a Premier who disappeared, literally went away, for weeks. We see a government that was missing in action during the largest wave of the COVID-19 pandemic ever seen over the last two years. We see government ministers continually continuing to hide, continuing to avoid their jobs, essentially, Mr. Speaker.

What I think this amendment will do is at least compel them to come here and talk to the members – right? – talk to the other half of their caucus, talk to the opposition, talk to this place and explain themselves, explain where they were, why they were making decisions or really, in many cases, Mr. Speaker, explain why they weren't making decisions. I think that's something very important to understand as well.

I don't think it's going to be beneficial if instead we just have a key small group of ministers coming in here giving spin, and that's, unfortunately, I think, what we're going to see, why I expect the government will vote against this amendment although, of course, we've already seen them vote against the all-party committee to review the process. Mr. Speaker, that's something that Albertans are going to be very disappointed about, right?

We know Albertans right now are very disappointed with this government, and I hear that every day – right? – when I make phone calls to my constituents, when I go to the doors, when I just read my e-mails when I wake up in the morning, Mr. Speaker. We know that Albertans are very disappointed in this government and want to see a review of the processes this government is making, and it doesn't make any sense that the government backbenchers, the half of the UCP caucus who aren't in the government, wouldn't also want answers to those same questions. We know that there are plenty of MLAs in Calgary who sit in the UCP caucus, and I would expect them to want these answers as well. I would expect them to want to be able to have sufficient time, more than the 15 minutes, to ask ministers questions. I would expect them to want sufficient time to be able to ask every member of cabinet these questions.

I know there are a lot of cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Premier has decided to continue to grow the size of his

cabinet. Despite that, we see some very interesting decisions of who ends up in cabinet, but of course we know that about half of the caucus is in cabinet now, so this would mean quite a substantial debate. It would mean quite a substantial amount of time required for this debate, but I think that's good, right? I think that's good for democracy. I think it's good to be able to have that accountability mechanism, and I think it's good that we'd be able to have members of both sides of this House asking, well, half of the UCP caucus questions. I think that would be very interesting. I think it would be very enlightening in terms of what the impacts of these decisions are going to be.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. What we have seen time and time again is a government that's been dragged kicking and screaming to implement any measures at all to sort of stem the tide of the fourth wave of COVID-19, and then instead of seeing the actual recommendations being implemented, even the ones that they were dragged kicking and screaming to, we see them watering them down. We see them changing them and overruling the experts and, in many cases, overtly admitting that and saying so because they think it's a good thing. I think that's something that I'm pretty concerned about.

What I think this Legislature and a committee could have done would be to get to the bottom of this and understand why this has had such a detrimental impact on so many Albertans, what the thought process was that this government was going through when they decided it was going to be okay to let the fourth wave continue to surge in Alberta, when they decided it was going to be okay to have these processes continue unchecked, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, it turns out, I think, that maybe they just weren't at the wheel. It turns out that the government was basically on vacation. Very clearly, the Premier was on vacation during one of the largest public health emergencies, I think the largest public health emergency, ever seen in the province of Alberta. The Premier disappeared for weeks. We know that while the Premier disappeared, it seems like everybody else disappeared, every other minister. Mr. Speaker, I think that Albertans deserve to know what happened there. I think Albertans deserve to know why that happened. Albertans deserve to know why the Premier's calendar was empty while he claimed that he was working. I think that Albertans deserve to know what the impacts of an absentee government were on the results of the peak of the fourth wave of the pandemic, right? How big an impact did having an absentee government have on this COVID-19 pandemic? How big of an impact was it that the Minister of Education was nowhere to be seen for almost a month?

I think those are really important questions that Albertans are going to want answers to, and they're questions that we can ask in this process, of course. With this amendment we're going to have a bit more time to ask those questions. I don't think we're going to get good answers. I think we need a committee process that can actually go and compel witnesses to get good answers about that, Mr. Speaker, actually compel documents to get good answers about that. Instead, what we're going to see is, I believe, a process that's going to be very watered down, that's going to allow ministers that have been hiding for months to continue to hide, to continue to avoid accountability, to continue to avoid the checks and balances that our democratic system is suppose to provide here. I think that's something that Albertans are going to continue to be disappointed about.

We see it across the province right now. I mean, I hear from people from all over the province. I just have to look at my e-mail right now, and I'm sure I've got more e-mails coming in about people who are upset with this government. Frankly, it is something that I'm very disappointed about because I want this government to succeed. I want this government to do well. I want them to be able

to help stem the tide of the pandemic. I want them to be able to save lives, but instead we see absenteeism. Instead, we see a government full of neglect and basically leaving Albertans to suffer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29.1 will be available on speeches going forward.

I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader has risen.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the Chamber and start speaking for the first time as we reconvene the Legislature and get to work on behalf of Albertans. I appreciate that the hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader has moved this amendment, one that I personally will not be supporting for a number of reasons, but I would like to maybe quickly draw a bit of a comparison of what we intend to do in this Chamber versus what I believe the opposition is trying to do. I think we all do want to understand and have a look at how this government addressed the COVID-19 pandemic. I think it's an important question to ask.

But right now we are in the middle of a fourth wave, facing the realities of the delta variant, and if I understand it correctly, members opposite are looking to strike a select special committee to bring in health care workers and ask them questions about the response to the pandemic when right now we are asking them to address the pandemic itself. I could only imagine if I was a front-line health care worker, who I am so eternally grateful for and all the work that they have done for this entire pandemic as they fight right now to try to continue to, you know, address the needs in the health care system. For us to pull them out of that job, when we are desperate to keep up, to come appear before a committee for political reasons, Mr. Speaker – I don't understand the logic of the members opposite. There are certainly needs the health care system is addressing, but I would feel like it would be irresponsible for members of this Chamber to try and bring health care workers before a select special committee right now. I think it's totally irresponsible.

I think it's a great opportunity, with this motion put forward by the hon. Government House Leader, to allow ministers to speak and answer questions before this Chamber, which is our job, and allow the members opposite, both independents and members of the opposition caucus, to hold the government to account, which is their job and one that I know they take very seriously. But I will not be supporting this amendment, and I appreciate the hon. Government House Leader bringing forth this motion. It's an opportunity for us to address some concerns of the public and the opposition.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do move that we adjourn debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:30 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Rutherford
Allard	Luan	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Madu	Schow
Ellis	Neudorf	Shandro
Frey	Nixon, Jeremy	Smith
Getson	Orr	Stephan
Glubish	Panda	Toor
Guthrie	Rehn	Williams

Issik	Reid	Yao	[Motion to adjourn debate carried]
LaGrange	Rowswell	Yaseen	
Against the motion:			The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader has risen.
Dang	Pancholi	Schmidt	
Irwin	Phillips	Sigurdson, L.	Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've enjoyed each other's company enough this afternoon. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.
Nielsen	Renaud		
Totals:	For – 30	Against – 8	[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:47 p.m.]

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