



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 26, 2021

Day 118

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (Ind)
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

Party standings:

United Conservative: 20

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was Small Business Week, and I want to acknowledge every single small business that has had to overcome the challenges of the last 20 months. Unfortunately, this UCP government has hindered small business rather than helped. The Premier has continuously abandoned small-business owners and their workers, who have been stuck on the front lines protecting Albertans and keeping our economy going. Now Alberta's small businesses are struggling to deal with the fourth wave, a wave that was directly caused by this UCP government.

As case numbers rose and revenues fell, the Premier went on vacation, and no one was left in charge. Instead of implementing business-saving measures that could've reduced the spread in August and increased consumer confidence, this government did nothing. Instead of standing up for small businesses, the UCP was too busy infighting and paralyzed to speak out against their antivaxxer base. The UCP claims to be the party of small business. This is clearly not true.

The Alberta NDP has been calling for small-business supports from day one. We've been dragging this UCP government through this pandemic to take action. Equal support for new small businesses, increased SMER payments through the second and third wave, and improved rental supports are just a few things we called for for weeks to months before this government took action.

Now we've been calling for an additional round of SMER to help small businesses deal with the fourth wave, a wave that was preventable. Instead, this UCP government has announced a measly \$2,000 to help with implementing the UCP's vaccine passport. This is nowhere near enough and months too late. Many estimates have the additional labour costs alone to implement the vaccine passport at over \$60,000 a year. These businesses need more.

I urge everyone to go to albertasfuture.ca to check out all of the policies we've called for and see for yourself. The UCP does not have small businesses' backs; we do.

Alberta Senators

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are frustrated with a federal government that continually treats Albertans with little to no regard. This is why our government committed to pushing for a fair deal for Alberta within Confederation, and we have been delivering

on that promise. We established the Alberta Parole Board to provide a faster and more responsible justice system to stop allowing repeat offenders to target everyday Albertans. We also established an Alberta Chief Firearms Officer to respect responsible, law-abiding Albertans' long history of firearms ownership.

Alberta's Senate elections are another tool to give Albertans a say about their representation in Ottawa. After the NDP let the Senate election legislation lapse in 2016, our government reinstated Senate elections to allow Albertans to pick who would best represent them in the Senate.

Alberta deserves Senate representation that is actually accountable to Albertans. Appointed Alberta Senators often vote against the interests of the people and the province they represent, and I believe a lack of elected accountability is a core reason. Key Senate votes in recent history point to the importance of Albertans having proper representation in the Senate. On Bill C-48, Trudeau's tanker ban, Senators who Albertans elected voted against the legislation while unelected Senators voted in support of the bill. Again, on Bill C-69, the no more pipelines legislation, appointed Senators voted to pass the bill while elected Senators voted the bill down. These two bills are a key example of the importance of having Senators that are held accountable to the interests of this province by way of elections.

In the recent Senate election over 1,118,000 Albertans voted to send Ottawa a message they cannot ignore. This is overwhelming support from Albertans who elected Senators to represent their interests. Mr. Speaker, Albertans want, need, and deserve fair and accountable representation in the Senate. I encourage the Prime Minister to respect the democratic wishes of this province. Do not ignore these results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cystic Fibrosis Treatment

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you about a friend of mine and one of the bravest people I know, Marten DeVliieger. Marten was born with cystic fibrosis, a debilitating lung disease. Marten is the father of two young children, energetic 9- and 11-year-olds. All his life Marten was in and out of the hospital, dealing with lung infections, constantly on antibiotics, which cost his family \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month. However, Marten is the type of person that makes lemonade out of lemons. When he was just 17 years old, he invented the Monarch airway clearing system, that is now available in most countries throughout the world. This vest vibrates the lungs, clearing away some of the mucus. His invention has helped CF patients throughout the world to cope a little better.

Today Marten and many other CF patients in Alberta will be the beneficiaries of a new innovation, a drug called Trikafta. Prior to today Marten had to purchase this drug out of the States, at great cost to himself. He describes his experience this way: I took the first dose at 8 a.m.; by noon my lungs were purging; within two weeks my lungs had gone from 49 per cent FEV1 to 72 per cent. Marten is starting to gain weight. His liver function is improving. He hasn't been to the hospital or been on antibiotics since he started this treatment. This has truly been a miracle drug for Marten.

Marten never thought he would make it to the age of 50. Today Marten has a new lease on life. Because our government made this drug available to Marten and the hundreds of other CF patients in Alberta, Marten believes that he will see his children graduate, marry, and even see his grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, as a proud grandfather of four I am so happy to know that Marten will be able to see his grandchildren because of the work he advocated for and we completed.

Health System Capacity and Mental Health Services

Ms Sigurdson: Over 3,000 people have tragically died from the COVID-19 virus, and thousands have been impacted by cancelled surgeries. My heart goes out to every one of them who have lost a loved one during this pandemic. COVID-19 has caused stress and uncertainty and is taking a toll on Albertans' mental health.

An article by Calgary physician Dr. Eddy Lang revealed that hospital admission regarding mental and behavioural disorders related to alcohol use, depression, and withdrawal increased during the pandemic, and this has gotten worse as the pandemic has continued. Dr. Shaheen at the University of Calgary said: patients wait longer to come to the hospital; they tell us, "We're afraid that if we come, then the same pre-COVID treatment won't be available;" they say that they try to manage on their own. In addition, Alberta is experiencing a tragic overdose crisis, where four Albertans are dying each day. We know that these are preventable deaths. As this pandemic rages on, health care workers' mental health is being compromised.

Alberta is experiencing a mental health crisis, and the UCP has yet to adequately respond. In fact, they've made things worse. The UCP have made it harder to access addiction services. For example, they moved the detox facility to a remote location at the edge of Edmonton, far from other services. They continually ignore health experts on the overdose crisis and have closed supervised consumption sites across Alberta. Instead of helping staff in health care, they have continually failed to address the pandemic, are trying to lower the wages of our health care heroes, and some UCP members have even taken to blaming health staff for limited health care capacity.

When I hear the UCP talk about mental health, they're often concerned about COVID-19 restrictions. They do not recognize that these restrictions are needed because of their failed response. Albertans are being hit by multiple crises right now. They need leadership and a government that understands the province and mental health.

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

Alberta Summer Games 2023 in Highwood

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After some time away I will admit that it does feel good to be back before you in the House. Since last session Highwood has continued to show its strength and resilience, and I truly am proud of the way people in Highwood continue to support our community.

Over the past few months the Okotoks car show saw a record number of cars, generating thousands of dollars for charity. Okotoks received a municipal excellence award for their public transit system. The Sinclair-Smith family was awarded the farm century award. Our ag minister presented Millarville race ag society with an ag innovation award. And, maybe most importantly, our entire province can look forward to Highwood hosting the 2023 Alberta Summer Games.

1:40

Highwood is truly honoured and humbled to be given the opportunity to be the first host in five years of the Alberta Summer Games, and I can assure you that Black Diamond, Okotoks, and surrounding communities will not disappoint. Bringing the Alberta Summer Games to the area was a primary goal of our late mayor, Bill Robinson. He knew that our area is full of outstanding people, volunteers, sports organizations, and local businesses that will ensure that all visitors from across the province are well taken care

of. Most importantly, the great people of Highwood will make you feel welcomed in that home.

The Alberta Summer Games is an incredible opportunity for youth and our communities to come together through sport and competition, a time where we will all have an opportunity to cheer on the best athletes our province has to offer. The youth who wish to compete in these games will need our support starting now. I would encourage everyone to do all they can to help support sports organizations in the area. The work they do far exceeds the summer games; it supports mental wellness while building strong life skills in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Industries

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First to close, last to open: that is a common description now for the live event and arts industries across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here in Alberta the arts and live entertainment sector have been steps behind because of this government's mishandling of the pandemic. They were promised the best summer ever. What followed only weeks later as hospitalizations soared was a sweep of restrictions for live events and the spaces where artists earn their livings.

For 20 months the rug was continuously pulled out from under these workers just as they were starting to find their footing. They needed to be able to stay open because the supports put in place for profit spaces from this government were next to zero. With the literal hundreds of thousands in debt that venues and arts spaces were taking on over the pandemic, artists began to see the spaces where they earned their paycheques disappear. We have lost almost 10 per cent of Alberta's arts, entertainment, and recreation businesses over the last 20 months, and we're far behind the national average.

The UCP are bringing in legislation today, but I am doubtful that it will address the damage that they have caused. This sector is drowning. I implore this government to pay attention to the cries from this sector and use the legislation to develop a long-term plan to ensure that we don't turn our backs on an important piece of our identity and communities.

Thank you.

Calgary and Edmonton Municipal Elections Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Toor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the candidates, win or lose, who participated in the recent municipal elections throughout Alberta. The number of candidates trying to seek elected office and their dedication to the public service is a strong indication of the vibrancy and strength of our democracy.

I would especially like to congratulate the new mayors of our two largest cities, newly elected Mayor Amarjeet Sohi in Edmonton and Mayor Jyoti Gondek in Calgary. Both mayors represent first times for our province as the first big city mayors of Punjabi descent. In addition, Mayor Gondek is the first female Calgary mayor. This again speaks to our cultural growth as a community, and Albertans should be proud of what this represents for the growth of our cultural mosaic and the confidence that demonstrates in our future. I also want to congratulate the two winning councillors in my area of northeast Calgary, my good friend Raj Dhaliwal, who has an impressive energy background, and Andre Chabot on his return to the Calgary council.

Mr. Speaker, while we had a lot to celebrate, there is also a cause for concern. Yesterday racist graffiti attacking the Sikh faith was

spray-painted on the road leading towards the gurdwara Sahib, located in southwest Calgary. While this incident is concerning, I am even more concerned by the rising number of hate-motivated crimes targeting ethnic minorities across Canada. I encourage community members to remain vigilant and report any such incidents to local authorities. Today I stand with the Sikh Society of Calgary and gurdwara Sahib in condemning this disgusting, racist act of hatred. Racism has no place in Alberta, and as Albertans we always stand against intolerance.

Thank you.

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

Former MLA Clint E. Dunford

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take time today to talk about a remarkable man, former Lethbridge-West MLA Clint Dunford, who passed away on October 14 of this year at the age of 78. Clint was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1993 and re-elected for a fourth term in November 2004. He held the seat until 2008.

During his time in the Legislature he held positions as minister of Alberta advanced education and career development, minister of Alberta human resources and employment, and minister of economic development. He was responsible for the personnel administration office, the Alberta Labour Relations Board, the Workers' Compensation Board, and the Appeals Commission for Alberta workers' compensation.

Despite being an important figure here in Edmonton, Clint never forgot the community who elected him, and he fought extremely hard for Lethbridge, securing funding for many important projects in the city, most notably for renovations of the Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, which named its restaurant after him, the Dunford Diner.

When I was elected in 2019, I attended a local political leaders' event held by the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce. The next day Clint stopped by my office and told my staff that he was at the event the night before and wanted to let me and my staff know how I had done. This story highlights who he was, a veteran politician going out of his way to make me, a rookie politician, feel valued and appreciated at the early stages of my political career. He was a gentleman, a husband, a father, a statesman, a mentor, and a friend.

I would like to thank Clint for his kindness and to celebrate his service to our province and to Lethbridge. My heart goes out to his family as they grieve the loss of an amazing man.

To Clint Earl Dunford, may the Lord bless you and keep you, make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

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

Spine Health

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October 16 was World Spine Day, which highlighted the importance of spine health and the role of chiropractic care to combat long-term pain and disability. Taking care of your back health is important, especially because back pain is the largest cause of disability and one of the costliest conditions to address.

More than 1 million Albertans will suffer from musculoskeletal pain this year, with more than 50,000 heading to emergency departments for care. While some aches and pains are natural, many Albertans are experiencing new spine-related pains or the return of chronic back pain due to working from home or other measures brought on by COVID-19.

This highlights the need for Albertans to engage in physical activity every day and to meet with a chiropractor for pain or for preventative reasons. Alberta's chiropractors provide valuable, drug-free treatment to protect your spinal health, reduce pain, and prevent injury.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a shout-out to the many fantastic chiropractors in my riding – Dr. Friesen, Dr. Kulak, Dr. Stefanick, and Dr. Cubos – for working hard every day to make sure our residents receive the great back and spine care that everyone in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain requires.

Whether we are in the trades, performing back-breaking work, or working in an office or at home, we all need to keep our back and spine in good shape to do our jobs to the best of our abilities, and one of the recommendations chiropractors make to help prevent back pain is to stretch. There is a great routine at straightenupalberta.com which includes 12 stretches that can be performed in just under 10 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all of my colleagues here in the House to try those stretches during this legislative session.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the time is 1:50.

Oral Question Period

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

COVID-19 Case Increase and Response

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when the Premier was asked about his inaction during Alberta's fourth wave, he took no responsibility. He then made excuses for why his whole cabinet vanished in August, none of them coming anywhere close to the definition of leadership. Now the Premier insists that he was regularly briefed and fully in charge while he was overseas. So let's test that. To the Premier. On August 16 the faculty at the University of Calgary wrote you an open letter signed by more than 550 staff and students. What did they ask for? Can you tell us?

1:50

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed, during my two weeks of personal time in August I was briefed by my staff daily on ongoing developments and had regular briefings from officials about the state of COVID in Alberta. Policy changes were made during that time, for example, the extension of the booster shots to the residents of long-term care. We began preparing, for example for the \$100 incentive, which has helped to increase vaccination rates. Of course, during all of that period, like, every day, different organizations and individuals are offering their views on COVID policy. They're welcome to do so. The government has to take responsible action. It has done so.

Ms Notley: There were over 500 people from his city that signed that letter, and they asked for mandatory masking and a provincial process for a vaccine passport.

Now, on August 20 AHS was recalling nurses from vacation so they could work mandatory overtime in the ICU. Kind of funny given that the escalating crisis was not enough to recall the Premier from his vacation. But, regardless, health experts on that day were deeply concerned as hospitalizations passed a critical milestone. What was that milestone, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition seems to be mystified about the fact that COVID has hit jurisdictions hard all around the world at various times, in different waves, for a number of different, complex reasons. We have seen a very significant spike

in our entire region of the U.S. northwest and the Canadian west. Our friends in Saskatchewan are experiencing a more difficult situation than Alberta right now, but neighbouring states, including Washington, Montana, Idaho, faced very strong fourth-wave spikes. Thanks to the diligence of Albertans, however, we appear to be getting this fourth wave under control.

Ms Notley: Allow me to help the Premier. That day Alberta's hospitalizations crossed 200 for the first time, and there were 6,000 active cases. Now, on August 24 Alberta's ICU numbers reached a two-month high. It was clear the plan was failing. Still no one said a word. The next day, August 25, Alberta reported more than a thousand new cases for the first time since May. Not a word. On August 26, a day later, hospitalizations crossed 300, and guess what? The Health minister spoke for the first time. Does the Premier know what he announced?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again, we as a province took onboard the public health advice based on the performance of COVID-19 in jurisdictions with similar levels of vaccination. In moving towards endemic status from pandemic management, it's clear that the policy was not based on – there was an analytical flaw in terms of the data, particularly in the United Kingdom and the age structure of their vaccination rates. When we needed to course correct, we did so, and I want to thank Albertans for having risen to the challenge in this fourth wave.

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

Ms Notley: The answer is that the Health minister announced that the UCP would not implement a vaccine passport.

Now, the Premier had no idea what was happening when he was away, and no one was in charge. On August 29, as cases skyrocketed, the QE II hospital in Grande Prairie reached capacity, and COVID patients started transferring to Edmonton. This riding is represented by the Minister of Finance. He knows that hospital was already facing a critical staff shortage. To the Minister of Finance: why didn't he do anything while his boss was away? Why was he silent? Is that what leadership looks like to him?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know where the NDP is coming from. They have always wanted to maintain a hard and continuous lockdown, indiscriminate violation of people's lives, their personal and professional lives. Their model for COVID policy is the state of Victoria in Australia, where they rolled the military in to enforce stay-at-home orders for months on end. I don't believe the people of Alberta would have accepted that kind of approach. We have taken a balanced approach, looking at restrictions as a last and limited measure. I want to thank Albertans for rising to the challenge of this fourth wave.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the only person asking for a hard lockdown was the federal Conservative leader on this Premier during that time.

On August 30, when the Member for Lethbridge-East explained the UCP strategy, he said: let the delta variant rip through Alberta's unvaccinated population. Now, at the time not a single member said anything, not even the cabinet, not the House leader, arguably the person in charge in the Premier's absence. To the House leader: why did he stay silent? Who was in charge then, and is that his idea of leadership?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government took action when necessary in order to address this fourth wave. What we have not

done – what we have not done – is to follow the NDP's advice. Had the NDP been making these decisions, people would have been unable to attend summer weddings, they would have been unable to gather at backyard barbecues, they would have been unable to go to work, and kids never would have been in our schools for in-classroom instruction over the past 18 months. Thank goodness we didn't have their rabidly ideological approach to this very difficult problem of managing this pandemic.

The Speaker: I might just provide caution to members of the opposition that even though you might be making comments off the record, if they're unparliamentary, the Speaker may ask you to withdraw and apologize later.

The opposition.

Ms Notley: By September 1 Alberta was reporting more than 1,300 new cases per day. There were 487 people in hospital, 114 in ICU. Doctors and teachers were begging for action, and business owners in Calgary were desperate for this UCP government to put in some kind of vaccine passport. To the minister of jobs, supposedly. These businesses are in his city, yet the Premier and the cabinet said nothing and ignored them for weeks. Is this that minister's idea of strong leadership?

Mr. Kenney: Once again, Mr. Speaker, all 10 Canadian provincial governments and the federal government expressed opposition to proof-of-vaccination programs earlier this year. I think all of them, certainly this government, did so in good faith, but circumstances changed. One of the things that we all know about COVID is that we have to be prepared to face the emerging reality, as this government did, as one of the 10 provincial governments, changed its approach because of low vaccination rates, because of the virulence of the delta variant and the need to protect lives and the health care system. We took that responsible decision.

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

COVID-19 in Schools

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this complete inaction caused immense stress during back to school. This government decided to stop providing any information on school outbreaks after suspending contact tracing in schools and lifting requirements for students to isolate. One month into the new school year Alberta saw more than 50 school outbreaks and 700 active alerts. Yesterday the Education minister refused to answer this question, so to the Premier: how many Alberta children contracted the virus at school since September 1, and if you don't know the answer, why not?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to report that right now we have less than 1 per cent of all students and staff that have current active cases. We have zero schools – from September to date we've had nine schools that have had to transition to online, but right now we have zero schools that are online. In fact, we are quite happy to say that students are in school learning in front of teachers.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, neither the Premier nor his minister seem able to answer that basic question about schools.

On October 5 the Premier reversed his position and announced that contact tracing would be restored at some point. This is after an entire month where parents were kept in the dark and teachers

tracked cases themselves through word of mouth. To alleviate the stress that he caused originally, the Premier announced 6 million home-based rapid testing kits for unvaccinated children. Almost a month later no tracing, no tests. Where are the tests?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition was paying attention, she would understand that there is a significant scarcity of rapid antigen test kits available in Canada, and that is in part because Health Canada has only approved 12 rapid antigen test kit products as opposed to the European drug administrator, which has approved over a hundred, which is why I raised this within the Council of the Federation and got the concurrence of all 10 Premiers to write to the Prime Minister asking that Health Canada accelerate approvals of rapid antigen tests.

Ms Notley: What I understand is what the Premier promised Alberta families three and a half weeks ago and has failed to come clean on since.

Now, quote: there are so many families that have already had kids get sick and family members get sick from the cases that we've seen in schools. Mr. Speaker, that's Lori Hill, an Edmonton mother and teacher from Edmonton public. School boards like hers spent millions of dollars trying to do this themselves, and now they're waiting for AHS to take over. What is the date parents can expect contact tracing to be finally back online given the delay caused by the original decisions of that UCP cabinet, and will the Premier admit that the correct answer should have been September 1?

2:00

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy again to report that we have less than 1 per cent of students and staff that are absent due to COVID. But I also want to share that when I was across the province touring in August and early September, I met with teachers and parents and school boards, and overwhelmingly I heard: thank God the NDP weren't in charge during this pandemic. That's what I heard from parents, and they were happy to know that they were going to start in school in a more normal setting. [interjections]

Thank you.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

COP 26 Climate Change Conference

Ms Notley: Yesterday this Premier admitted his government will not be sending a single representative to COP 26 in Scotland, a massive missed opportunity for our economy. COP is the forum for global leaders, government officials, and industry to set shared goals in humanity's fight against climate change, and for the first time in years the U.S. is back at the table. As a leading energy producer it is shocking Alberta would give it a miss. Does the Premier actually believe that a duck and cover is the best strategy for growing Alberta's markets on the international stage?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I admit to being a bit confused by the NDP's approach because just a moment ago they were demanding a hard lockdown. We're in a state of public health emergency, but now she wants us to send dozens of people on intercontinental flights to go and attend a conference overseas. Perhaps she could provide us with a little clarity on: which lane is it?

In terms of the Glasgow conference, of course, Alberta is not a national government. We will make our views very well known to the government of Canada.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our province's largest producers are committed to achieving net zero by 2050. Our clean tech sector is developing game-changing reductions in emissions, and Alberta is phasing out coal-fired electricity generation, something we should all be proud of. Just last week the Energy minister said that Alberta needs to be asserting itself on the world stage to protect our industry. Premier, why is this government missing an opportunity to set policy, set the record straight, and set the stage for economic growth and job creation for those working Albertans who need him to do his job?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, how dare this NDP leader talk about jobs and the economy in the context of the energy sector, which was devastated. Tens of billions of dollars fled this province, record-high unemployment under that government that colluded with Justin Trudeau to kill Northern Gateway and Energy East, that opposed the Keystone XL pipeline, that stood on a stage with Steven Guilbeault, the former Greenpeace extremist, to announce a carbon tax on Albertans. How dare she. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, Murray Edwards was on that stage, too, so I guess the Premier has something to take up with him.

You know what? He claims he's worried about case counts in COVID when just a couple of months ago the Premier was fine to fly to Spain or Paris or wherever he went overseas. I won't judge. Those sound like lovely vacations if you'd left someone else in charge, but he should explain: why is it safe for him to fly to Europe for his own personal vacation, but somehow it's too dangerous for any of his ministers to meet with world leaders on behalf of the working people of this province?

Mr. Kenney: Well, speaking of working people, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that there are 60,000 more Albertans working today than three months ago, 90,000 more Albertans working today than at the beginning of the year, that Alberta is leading Canada in economic growth, that we are projected to lead Canada in growth next year, that we have the second-fastest growing number of jobs in the entire federation, that we just saw an announcement of the largest capital investment in at least a decade in Alberta with the Dow project, the best year ever in our film industry, the best year ever in technology, the best year ever in forestry. Thank God the NDP is not there.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Federal Equalization Program Referendum

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Monday Albertans went to the polls to have their say on important issues that deeply affect the future of our province such as the referendum on equalization. For decades Albertans have contributed a tremendous amount of money to the federation through equalization, only in turn to be taken advantage of, but this year thousands of Albertans came together for a chance to speak as one united Alberta. Can the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General tell this House about the message Albertans sent to the federal government with this referendum?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. Indeed, Albertans sent a strong message to the federal government about the way they are treated by

Confederation. This government is proud to join the strong collective voices of 62 per cent of Albertans in calling on the Prime Minister and his government to treat Alberta fairly and ensure that their voices are heard, their tax dollars respected, and their value recognized. Let me be clear. Albertans are demanding change, and this United Conservative government is listening. We are taking action, and we will obtain a fair deal . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans spoke loud and clear on setting a clear direction for their government to move forward in removing equalization payments and given that this government, in keeping its campaign promises to Albertans, fulfilled its commitment of putting the question of equalization to the ballot, again to the same minister: can you tell this House what the next steps for this government will be in Alberta's fight for a fair deal?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our direction and mandate by the people of our province is clear and resounding. We have committed to moving forward with pursuing the removal of equalization payments from the Constitution. I can promise you we are getting straight to work. Over the last 25 years Albertans have contributed over \$400 billion more to the nation in taxes than they have received from Ottawa. It is shameful that our tax dollars are being taken away by the federal government to be spent across the country by a government that seeks to shutter the sector that drives our economy and way of life.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the resolve that this government has shown in achieving a fair deal on behalf of Albertans and given the loud voice of Albertans calling on the Prime Minister to move forward with removing equalization from the Constitution, again, can the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General please tell this House: what are the key concessions that the government is seeking from Ottawa on behalf of Albertans?

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous NDP government, that cozied up to the federal government in their attempts to thwart Alberta's economy and make it harder for Albertans to support their families, we are stepping up to the plate to negotiate a better deal for our province. We know that the NDP and their friends want to curry favour from the Trudeau Liberals. That is why the NDP and their supporters opposed and voted against this referendum and tried to silence Albertans' grievances. It didn't work, and for that I am grateful to all Albertans. Albertans don't back down, and neither will this United Conservative government.

Postsecondary Education Funding COVID-19 Cases on Postsecondary Campuses

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, I have served four terms in this House, and I have never been so horrified at the damage being caused by a sitting government. This Minister of Advanced Education is bringing in legislation today to tinker around the edges of postsecondary. Meanwhile his government has taken almost \$700 million in cuts to postsecondary education in Alberta. If this minister really wants to demonstrate that he supports postsecondary and its potential as part of Alberta's economic future, will he

reverse the devastating cuts from this crucial sector right here, right now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of things that we've done over the course of the past couple of years, including developing the first strategic plan for our postsecondary system in 15 years, providing \$5.6 million to fund new microcredential opportunities, creating new scholarships to help more Albertans access postsecondary education, creating more work-integrated learning placements, and being more accountable with taxpayer funding to our postsecondary institutions as well as ensuring our postsecondary institutions are complying with free speech policies and principles. These are some of the measures we've introduced.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that cost cutting postsecondary leads to costs being downloaded onto students, cutting off access for thousands of students in the process, and given that this government has also increased interest paying by students on loans to go to postsecondary schools, increasing costs again, and given that the cost of living is rising substantially for students and for Albertans generally and that this government has done nothing to protect students from car insurance costs, skyrocketing utility bills, and so much more, can the minister tell the House right now whether he thinks attending postsecondary is already too expensive for students in this province?

2:10

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I think it's a good opportunity to inform the House that today, as we speak, tuition rates in Alberta are comparable to that of British Columbia and well below the national average. However, it's important that we continue to provide financial assistance to our students. That's why our government has created new scholarships to help more students access postsecondary education, including the high school apprenticeship scholarship and other awards. We've also continued to fund pressures in student aid and growing demand for other scholarships as well.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that yesterday I asked this minister exactly how many students and staff have become infected with COVID-19 while attending a postsecondary school in this province, given that the minister did not have an answer yesterday but certainly has many people amongst his staff and the public service that could help him to get these facts straight, and given that we also know that the spread of COVID-19 on campuses is a major concern, especially as schools attempt to implement a vaccine passport system with no government support, Minister, for the record, how many Albertans have contracted COVID-19 on our campuses in Alberta?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I've always made myself available to all of our postsecondary institutions and have reiterated on a number of occasions that Alberta's government is standing ready to support them in what they need to implement successful vaccine passport programs. Further, I know that many of our institutions have implemented vaccine programs at their institutions. I also know, in talking with many of our institutions, that a high degree of them, including both students and faculty, are vaccinated. For many of our institutions, that's north of 90 per cent, but I encourage more to get vaccinated. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

COVID-19 Protective Measure Compliance

Mr. Dang: Well, it's good to be back to be doing the people's business in this Chamber, and it's important that Albertans who have suffered through the fourth wave of this pandemic, which was driven by the incompetence and arrogance of this government, see their elected representatives leading by example. That's why it was so sad to see this government vote down our simple proposal to require Alberta's elected leaders to show proof of vaccination before entering this Chamber. That proposal sends a clear-cut message that vaccinations are safe and our way out of this pandemic. Can the Government House Leader explain to Albertans why his government is so opposed to leading by example?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This caucus is leading by example. I'm happy to report that every member of this caucus has received a vaccination, except for one who's working through a medical circumstance. We continue to lead the way to show Albertans that vaccines are the number one way that we can be able to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and move forward. It's unfortunate that the hon. member went to Members' Services with a motion that should have been before the Chamber, but eventually they'll catch up to the process here after all these years. If he needs any help to understand the differences between Members' Services and the Chamber, he can give me a call. I'd be happy to help him out.

Mr. Dang: Given that Albertans don't believe a word coming out of this minister's mouth and given that this Premier steadfastly opposed vaccine passports – he even campaigned and fund raised against them – and given that we've all seen this government time and time again put the needs of their antiscience caucus before their responsibility to serve Albertans and given that they travelled internationally after telling Albertans to stay home, that they demanded people cancel in-person meetings and then spent a night partying at the sky palace, will the Minister of Health explain how he hopes to maintain credibility when encouraging Albertans to show proof of vaccination when he himself and his own colleagues won't do the same?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government put in the REP to protect Albertans and to also encourage Albertans to get vaccinated, and that's been successful. Vaccination rates have increased. First doses: from 78 per cent, they're now pushing 86 per cent. The focus of our government and my focus over the next little while is to be able to increase the vaccination rates, deal with vaccine hesitancy, because we know that is the way out of this pandemic.

Mr. Dang: Given that the vaccine passport program that this Premier refused to enact until the very last minute has been driving up vaccination numbers and given that Albertans are looking for us to lead by example and given that the Premier and, by extension, his government are the least trusted in Canada, can the Minister of Health or the Government House Leader tell this House whether they've personally collected proof of vaccination from every single member of the government caucus? Have they reviewed the proof of vaccination for every single government MLA, or was this just another empty promise by the UCP?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question from the hon. member. One day he might ask something about something that's important to his constituents, but happy to answer it. As I have confirmed in a letter to you, leadership has checked the vaccination status of our caucus except for the two members that are taking tests as they go inside the Chamber, just like it's outlined in the letter. Has that hon. member and his caucus checked all their vaccinations? [interjections] There you go, so problem solved. Let's get back to work. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Energy Industry Opposition

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Commissioner Allan's public inquiry into anti-Alberta, antienergy, foreign-funded campaigns has revealed that hundreds of millions of dollars have poured into Canada to keep Alberta's responsibly produced energy in the ground. Given that these campaigns have held back major investments and stifled the responsible diversification of our energy industry, to the Minister of Energy: can you highlight how these anti-Alberta campaigns have impacted our oil and gas sector and the people who rely on the industry for their livelihoods?

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

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the ENGOs and proponents and participants in the campaign celebrated and boasted about their success as pipelines were blocked and projects were abandoned, real Albertans lost their jobs, businesses went under, and families were hurt. We lost billions of dollars in royalties as we saw pipeline bottlenecks. We had heavy price discounts. While other jurisdictions were able to build infrastructure, we were blocked, and now we're in a global energy crisis where countries are stockpiling and we can't supply.

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy continues to work hard to diversify, with the development of emerging energy resources such as hydrogen, small modular reactors, and LNG. Given that these clean tech investments and projects represent an important and growing aspect of Alberta's energy industry mix, to the same minister: do you expect that these foreign-funded campaigns will continue to target these other developments and investments as well?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We are already seeing evidence that these campaigns are targeting the energy resources of the future, things like hydrogen, LNG, carbon capture, utilization, and storage. It's already happened. I think we can take the key findings from the public inquiry and learn from them and know that we can use those things to protect the energy resources of the future. If anything, we learned from the public inquiry how organized and sophisticated these groups are and how we have to protect Alberta for the energy of the future. That's what we're elected to do . . .

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is committed to protecting the interests of Albertans – and I know

personally people, neighbours in Calgary-Currie, who have lost their energy sector jobs concurrently with these foreign-funded campaigns – and not only given that but that therefore, then, these foreign-funded campaigns have proven to be a serious threat to Alberta's ESG-leading energy sector, to the same minister: how does the government plan to mitigate the negative effects of these anti-Alberta campaigns on a go-forward basis?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, we've learned what these campaigns have done to energy projects of the past, but that's the past, and we can't change it. What we need to do is learn, learn from their tactics, learn how they did it to make sure that they can't do it again in the future. That's what a number of the recommendations in the report address. How can we learn from how they operated? How can we do better? There are a number of recommendations in there around collaboration, about working with our energy sector to make sure that we are bringing out the best in each group. The previous government did nothing of the sort to collaborate and counter these . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has a question.

Support for Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Mr. Carson: Small businesses have been devastated by the fourth wave. The Premier promised that Alberta would be open for good but then delivered restrictions with not nearly enough support. As Alberta is still in a public health emergency and small businesses are still struggling, this government needs to step up to ensure that they survive this pandemic, both with funding and also legislative protections. Will the minister commit to reinstating the commercial eviction ban immediately, and if he can't, will he at least explain to small businesses why he's fine with them paying the consequences for his government's dangerous incompetence?

2:20

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to that member for the question. We've been meeting with business organizations from across Alberta for the last few months on a weekly basis, getting their feedback in real time. In response to that, we've put in place the \$2,000 for the businesses that put in place the REP program. We're working with the federal program as well. We're working with the federal government and their new cabinet as well on programs going forward. I really want to thank the small businesses across Alberta for the last three months that have created 60,000 jobs for Albertans. We're leading the country in growth. We're leading in job creation as well for the future. Lots of work ahead.

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, given that a commercial rent ban would send the message that the Alberta government stands in support of small businesses and given that all members of this House supported a commercial eviction ban in the first wave but given that we are hearing small businesses are in much worse shape today as they have endured four waves of COVID and are facing mounting debt and challenges with attracting customers, will the minister let me know what I can tell all of the constituents and businesses in my constituency that are struggling? The minister can yell all he wants about the minuscule supports that they put forward, but it's just not nearly enough.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we have listened to businesses across Alberta in real time on a weekly basis, bringing in solutions that actually solve issues on the ground. When there was a challenge with food courts, we solved that within 24 to 48 hours in the REP program. We're going to continue to listen to small businesses across this province. Again to the member opposite: he should listen to small businesses as well. They're having success on the ground as well: 60,000 Albertans over the last three months. We're seeing labour shortages in every industry, from restaurants to cafes to construction. Alberta has a good economic rebound right now.

Mr. Carson: Given that along with a commercial rent ban our Official Opposition has also called for a ban on business utility shut-offs for six months, a 50 per cent reduction on small-business insurance costs, and a risk index that would allow businesses to better prepare for potential public health restrictions and given that we called for similar measures in waves 1 and 2 of this pandemic, Minister, please explain to businesses across the province why this government doesn't believe these measures are necessary, because they are truly, awfully tired of waiting for the sorry excuses that this government has put forward so far.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again, we're going to make sure we continue to work with businesses in real time on providing them with the supports they need. The support that we're providing to businesses that implement the REP program of \$2,000 is the only one of its kind right now in Canada. We're going to continue to work with the tourism industry. We've done that with a tourism levy abatement. We're continuing to work with hotel associations. But right now in Alberta we're seeing significant growth in diversification across our economy. The film industry is doubling. The tech industry is growing gangbusters. We're seeing the bounce back of our energy sector. That's good news for the future of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

COVID-19 Case Increase and Response

(continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Albertans remember that before the Member for Calgary-Varsity was named the Minister of Health, there was another member in that role. The Minister of Labour and Immigration was in charge of our health system as, thanks to the negligent incompetence of the UCP government, the health care system headed towards collapse. Yet during the month of August as cases rose, our ICUs filled, and hundreds lost their lives, that minister sat silent and unseen. Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration tell us when he was warned about the impending fourth wave and why he failed to take action?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I was appointed as the Minister of Health a month ago. My focus is on three key things. First is ensuring to help us get through this wave, and I'm very pleased to say that we're making progress. Numbers are down in terms of the number of cases. ICU cases are down. We're not out of the woods yet, so the second key focus is actually ensuring we have capacity now and into the future to deal with surgeries. Finally, we need to develop a contingency plan to deal with future waves. That is my focus, and that's what I'll continue to focus on with this government.

The Speaker: Happy to provide the member the citation in a moment, but I just would provide some caution about asking a member about a previous portfolio. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* makes many comments about this. I will provide them to you shortly if you'd like.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is up next.

Mr. Shepherd: More empty platitudes, Mr. Speaker. No plan. No accountability.

Given that Albertans went weeks without seeing their Premier and a month without seeing their Health minister during a looming health crisis that everyone except, apparently, this UCP cabinet could see coming and given that during that fourth wave, compounded by the failure of the previous Minister of Health, we saw thousands of life-changing, life-saving medical procedures being cancelled – maybe he knows the number, because his replacement apparently doesn't and won't share it – I must ask, then, the Minister of Health on behalf of his colleague: where was he? The Premier said that the vacation was the reason he . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Shepherd: . . . ignored the crisis, but where was the minister?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration. [interjections] Order.

Mr. Shandro: Because Edmonton-City Centre was asking the question, Mr. Speaker, all throughout August I continued to work, continued to be briefed, continued to meet with stakeholders, and continued to work with the department and AHS, as our new Minister of Health has continued to do since he's now come into the role.

Mr. Speaker, this is again the NDP continuing to play politics, continuing to not tell the truth to Albertans, continuing to be dishonest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre for your second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that we've heard stories about those who were forced to live in agony or who were unable to get necessary cancer surgery because this government allowed our health care system to reach the brink of collapse and given that the Premier has failed to take responsibility and apologize for the pain his failures inflicted on Albertans, will any minister who sat on their hands throughout the month of August, as case counts rose, and took no action, gave no word to Albertans, and allowed this tragedy to unfold stand and have the humility to apologize?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to go to a question that was raised by the hon. member in regard to surgeries, a conversation that we had yesterday. As I said yesterday, I feel for all the patients and families who had their surgeries cancelled or postponed during this process. In order to respond to the fourth COVID wave, we needed to react and ensure that we had the ICU spaces. We cancelled 50 per cent of the surgeries, continue to be at 50 per cent. The number of surgeries are actually increasing day by day. As I indicated yesterday to the hon. member, once we have a tally and a plan for it of when we're going to get to 100 per cent, I'll be happy to share the data with the members opposite.

Speaker's Ruling

Questions about a Previous Responsibility

The Speaker: Just for the benefit of the House, for those of you who are following along at home, chapter 11, page 509, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, addresses the issue that I've previously mentioned. More importantly, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, page 121:

(6) A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government. The Minister to whom the question is directed is responsible to the House for his or her present Ministry and not for any decisions taken in a previous portfolio.

I hope this will guide questions in the future.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

COVID-19 Rapid Testing and Serological Training

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of our government's COVID measures employers and service providers can apply to receive free rapid test kits for use in their organization's screening programs. Rapid test screening programs can identify people who don't know they're infected with COVID-19 so they can be isolated early to stop the spread. Isolating people early can prevent even larger numbers of people from getting sick. To the Minister of Health: what is the current eligibility criteria for an organization to be granted rapid testing supplies?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The rapid testing program is open to any public, private, or not-for-profit employer or service provider with an approved COVID-19 screening program. The application process prioritizes organizations involved with vulnerable populations, including high-risk settings and essential services. Rapid test kits are provided free of cost to successful applicants, who must ensure proper protocols are in place for COVID-19 screening, testing, and reporting, and organizations are responsible for all costs related to their screening program and assume all responsibilities.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, these rapid tests have been successfully piloted in long-term care homes, hospitals, homeless shelters, industry, and other areas that have had outbreaks. Given that rapid testing has helped to stop the spread in these environments and could do even more if made available for at-home testing – the European Union, for example, currently has rapid testing available for purchase at local pharmacies; for 20 euro you can get 30 tests – to the Minister of Health: does the government have plans to offer affordable in-home rapid antigen tests?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. The antigen test has a wide variety of uses, but it comes with a caution. The World Health Organization has in fact outlined specific situations where they should not be used due to their lower sensitivity compared to PCR tests, which are considered the gold standard of testing. They shouldn't be used for people who are asymptomatic, airport or border screening at points of entry, or areas with minimal community spread. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't have its use. As the hon. member pointed out, we see these in other jurisdictions. Health Canada is responsible for authorizing new medical technology and has

identified these tests as a high priority. We support that and are working with them.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that COVID immunity is obtained either naturally or with a vaccine and that Alberta has experienced less than a 1 per cent reinfection rate for individuals that have recovered from COVID infection and given that health officials are concerned about waning immunity, whether from a vaccine or an infection – going forward, antibody testing may be the only way to truly understand the level of immunity an individual has – to the same minister: will the government add a check mark on the QR code for individuals showing high enough levels of antibodies regardless of whether they were obtained naturally or through a vaccine?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. I completely understand why Albertans might be curious about serological testing for COVID-19. The test detects the antibodies produced in response to an infection. However, they can't confirm immunity or diagnose an active infection, so even if a test reveals the presence of antibodies to a virus, these antibodies may not be protective, and they may not last very long. Now, while widespread serology testing does not have a proven clinical or public health benefit, it can provide some data in terms of what's going on before. While Health Canada has authorized the sale of more than 20 of these devices, that are freely available online, we've only made publicly funded . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is next.

COVID-19 and Child Care

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Speaker, the decision by the UCP to recklessly open for summer with no plan if things went off the rails directly affected Alberta children who could not be vaccinated. The Premier went on holidays and didn't trust any of his UCP cabinet ministers to speak on behalf of Alberta children, including those ministers most responsible for children. They all failed to take actions to keep schools safe and child care safe. To the Minister of Children's Services. Parents and children feel abandoned by this government. Does she still support the Premier? Yes or no?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I do want to say that child care programs and preschool programs have done an excellent job of keeping children and staff safe throughout the pandemic. We have in fact provided \$150 million in pandemic relief funding, dollars that go towards cleaning supplies, PPE, recruitment, and staffing. Throughout this pandemic child care operators have been in constant contact with the government, and I do support the fact that our government has absolutely supported child care, preschool, and out of school care operators throughout this entire pandemic.

Ms Pancholi: I think that's a no.

Given that on October 5 the UCP announced the return of contact tracing for schools and expectations around mandatory vaccines for school staff and given that the same day I wrote to the Minister of Children's Services requesting similar measures to protect children in child care programs, including contact tracing, rapid testing, and vaccine mandates, and given that in her response the minister indicated that those measures weren't necessary because her "government continues to be responsive to changing

circumstances" – and we all know that's not true – to the same minister: why doesn't the UCP believe all children, including our youngest, deserve the same levels of protection from COVID?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the letter to the member opposite, we do continue to follow the direction and guidance of Alberta's chief medical officer of health, and the health guidance for child care is continually updated as needed to reflect the current health situation. Each time that happens we do in fact reach out to child care operators to make sure that they are aware of the guidance at the time. As always, we are fully committed to reaching out to operators as updates do change. I will point out that at the advice of the chief medical officer COVID-19 outbreak notification, investigation, and response have continued in child care centres.

Ms Pancholi: Given, Mr. Speaker, that last year I repeatedly asked the Minister of Children's Services to release unspent dollars in the child care budget directly to child care providers so that they could stay open for Alberta families and given that despite denying the money even existed, the UCP then handed out over \$100 million from the child care budget in Kenney cash that did nothing to help the sector and given once again . . .

Speaker's Ruling Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: Order. Order. The use of a name inside the Assembly, of course, is unparliamentary. I'm sure it was just an error, but you can reword your question in the most appropriate way possible.

Ms Pancholi: Apologies, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 and Child Care (continued)

Ms Pancholi: Given that once again there was surplus funding in the child care budget and that Alberta's economy and families need all the child care spaces we have to stay open, I will ask again to the same minister: will she commit today to ensuring the survival of the child care sector by providing all available unspent funding directly to child care providers?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, \$110.4 million in pandemic relief, \$16.2 million through the critical worker benefit, \$20.57 million – and I do want to make sure that the member opposite hears this number; she may not be aware of this investment – for staffing, recovery, and retention grants, about \$18 million of which has already been provided.

I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker, a child care director from Edmonton, who said, "I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and your staff for ensuring that all childcare centers, whether they be for profit or not for profit, are treated equitably and fairly . . . It is through your financial support and assistance that we are able to continue in these most challenging . . ."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has a question.

Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Culture. Ça fait deux mois depuis la démission de la députée de Fort

McMurray-Lac La Biche et la secrétaire parlementaire pour la francophonie. Depuis là, ce gouvernement n'a pas nommé un nouveau secrétaire, pour laisser les francophones sans voix au cabinet. Cela aurait été peut-être dire au cabinet d'écouter la commission scolaire des francophones quand elle disait que leur nouveau programme d'études cherchait à effacer l'histoire des francophones. Est-ce que le ministre peut expliquer pourquoi il n'a pas déjà nommé un remplacement?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will confess that I had a bit of a hard time hearing the details of that, but I think it has to do with CFEP. What I will say is that . . . [interjections] No?

An Hon. Member: Just carry on.

Mr. Orr: Carry on? Fine.

CFEP granting is actually – sorry. Community grants are actually up by 17 per cent, \$64.4 million. We've invested \$37 million, an increase of 88 per cent, in the community initiatives program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Renaud: Donné que ça ne devrait pas prendre deux mois pour ce gouvernement à nommer un représentant pour la communauté francophone et donné que si le ministre respectait la communauté francophone, il serait une priorité, est-ce qu'il pense qu'il n'y a personne au caucus qui qualifie ou parce qu'ils ne sont pas respectés par les albertains francophones? Expliquez le retard, s'il vous plaît.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. With regard to the naming of the Francophone Secretariat, that is something that we're definitely working on. The francophone community has been a great community here in Alberta. We're working together with them. It's a very important and growing community from all over the world, so it's something that we're going to continue to proceed with. Stay tuned. We'll be naming a new Francophone Secretariat very soon.

Ms Renaud: Donné que la communauté francophone se sentait déjà attaquée par ce gouvernement avec les compressions budgétaires de Campus Saint-Jean et donné que ce gouvernement n'a pas écouté la communauté francophone, qui leur ont dit que le programme ne répond pas aux besoins des élèves, et donné que la communauté francophone continue d'avoir mal à obtenir une réunion avec le ministre, est-ce que le ministre va nommer un secrétaire parlementaire aujourd'hui, pas demain? Sinon, expliquez.

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

Mr. Nicolaidès: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to Campus Saint-Jean, continuing to support Campus Saint-Jean is an important priority. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. I heard the question; I'll hear the answer.

Mr. Nicolaidès: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that sometimes the members opposite don't like to listen, but I'll try again.

You know, Mr. Speaker, supporting Campus Saint-Jean is an important priority. Our government continues to provide funding to the University of Alberta, who provides funding to the campus. As

well, we're in discussions with the federal government to find additional solutions for the campus.

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we'll return to the daily Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 101, sponsored by the hon. the Premier, as follows:*

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize the results of the referendum held on October 18, 2021, where 61.7 per cent of voters supported removing section 36(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, Parliament and government of Canada's commitment to the principle of making equalization payments;
- (b) reaffirm the principle articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1998 Quebec secession reference that it is the constitutional right of each participant in the freedom to initiate a constitutional challenge and that this right implies a duty on the other participants to engage in discussions to address any legitimate initiative to change the constitutional order;
- (c) authorize Her Excellency the Governor General to issue a proclamation under the Great Seal of Canada amending the Constitution of Canada in accordance with the schedule set forth below; and
- (d) direct the government of Alberta to take all necessary steps to secure a fair deal for Alberta in the Canadian federation, including the reform of federal transfer programs, the defence of provincial powers in the Constitution, and the right to pursue responsible development of our natural resources.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 74

Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

Mr. Nicolaidès: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2021.

Bill 74 will make a number of amendments to both the Post-secondary Learning Act and the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act. These changes will help facilitate the implementation of Alberta 2030, Alberta's first 10-year strategic plan in over 15 years, and to help respond to stakeholder feedback.

[Motion carried; Bill 74 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture.

Bill 75

Arts Professions Recognition Act

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave to introduce Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act.

This is an act that will formally acknowledge artists' rights and contributions to Alberta, making their artistic enterprises profitable

*See page 5750, left column, paragraph 4

and sustainable. It will help to protect artists' economic and contractual rights and emphasize in law Alberta's continued commitment to the freedom of artistic expression. Lastly, it will model the way for private and nonprofit employers and contractors in Alberta's economy to uphold the professional nature of artists' work.

I look forward to debating the bill in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 75 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has a tabling today. It is a requirement by legislation for him to table it in the House, and there being no other vehicle for him to deliver remarks, I have allotted him up to two minutes to provide the tabling.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for the Referendum Act it is my responsibility and pleasure to officially report to the Legislative Assembly the results of the referendum questions asked of Albertans during the recent municipal elections. As you know, Albertans were asked two referendum questions during the recent municipal elections, one about the principle of equalization and one about daylight saving time. These are two important issues to Albertans, and this was an opportunity to ask them directly. Our government cherishes the voices of the people of our province.

The question about equalization was: "Should section 36(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 – Parliament and the government of Canada's commitment to the principle of . . . equalization payments – be removed from the constitution?" Mr. Speaker, I can report that 61.7 per cent of those who answered the question voted yes; it should be removed from the Constitution. As this referendum question is binding, government will move forward with pursuing this issue with the federal government.

The second question we asked Albertans was: "Do you want Alberta to adopt year-round Daylight Saving Time, which is summer hours, eliminating the need to change our clocks twice a year?" Mr. Speaker, I can report that 50.2 per cent of Albertans who answered the question voted no, representing a majority. This means that government will not pursue the elimination of daylight saving time.

The people's voice is the cornerstone of our democracy, and we believe it is government's duty to ensure Albertans' voices are heard. These referendum questions, Mr. Speaker, were an opportunity to hear directly from Albertans. We thank all those who participated in this important democratic process.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have five copies of the returns for tablings.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order, and the hon. Government House Leader has withdrawn his point of order. However, I would like to provide some clarity to members of the Assembly. The Languages Act, section 5(1), language in the Assembly: "Members of the Assembly may use English and French in the Assembly." While it may have been courtesy at times to provide translations, it is certainly not required. If a member speaks any other language than French or English, a translation is required.

Yesterday the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall rose on a point of privilege, and I will provide the opportunity to respond to that point of privilege to the Government House Leader, followed by any other member of the Assembly should they wish to do so.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Member for Calgary-McCall came into this Chamber and made an allegation that the Premier, while the Premier was responding to a question, misled the Assembly. On behalf of the Premier, first of all, I can state that the Premier did not mislead the Assembly.

Members should be aware that the threshold for a prima facie breach of privilege is incredibly high. These thresholds are established in the third edition of Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, 2005, Mr. Speaker, at pages 653 and 654, as you know, which state:

There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: [first,] the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; [second,] it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, [third,] in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House.

The Member for Calgary-McCall, in his lengthy submission, made a number of points and statements based on false information. First off, Mr. Speaker, he claimed that the deputy chief medical officer of health indicated that the government was undertaking modelling related to the delta variant at a press conference on June 15, 2021. When asked to share the delta variant modelling, the deputy chief medical officer, Dr. Corriveau, stated: I don't think we've done that modelling yet; it's a work that is in progress.

Work in progress, Mr. Speaker, is very different than the information presented to the Premier or members of cabinet. When on June 16, 2021, the Premier answered, "There is no delta variant modelling," it is the truth because no such modelling existed on June 16, 2021. So this clearly fails the first of the three-part test required for successful contempt of the Assembly motion for misleading this Assembly.

However, Mr. Speaker, it also fails the second and third parts based on the arguments put forward by the Member for Calgary-McCall. The Member for Calgary-McCall tried to back up his false claim by pointing to sections of the document released on September 2, 2021, entitled *Shifting From Pandemic to Endemic*. He states that because the key modelling parameter values used in that September 2, 2021, document were from April 25 to June 5, the information must have been available on June 16. That is a false premise because, as stated on June 15 by the deputy chief medical officer, that information had not yet been compiled.

2:50

The Member for Calgary-McCall is wrong in his assertion that the Premier had the information at the time he answered the question on June 16. If he didn't knowingly make a misleading statement, he also certainly could not have intended to mislead this Assembly, therefore failing parts 2 and 3 of the test. I will refer the member, through you, Mr. Speaker, to read *Beauchesne's* 494, where it says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted . . . On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this does not rise to being a prima facie breach of privilege and hope that you will rule accordingly.

The Speaker: Are there other members who would like to provide submissions to the point of privilege? Seeing none.

As I mentioned yesterday, points of privilege are serious matters. I will take some time to consider both of the arguments made and report back to the Assembly at my convenience.

Now we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 73 Infrastructure Accountability Act

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move the second reading of Bill 73, the Infrastructure Accountability Act.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

We know that every investment into public infrastructure furthers Alberta's recovery plan by supporting jobs for Albertans and building the critical infrastructure upon which each of us in this place and all Albertans rely on. That's why the Infrastructure Accountability Act is good news for Albertans, especially job creators and, of course, taxpayers. It provides accountability and transparency for how government prioritizes and invests in the capital projects that keep people working and build our economy. It demonstrates the Alberta government's commitment to supporting our economic recovery by being strategic in how it manages public assets in the best interests of Alberta taxpayers. It raises the bar on transparency and ensures that government gets right the critical decisions about the public works projects it pursues.

The act does this by legislating a framework to guide how capital projects and spending are prioritized. It ensures that criteria are in place to evaluate project priorities and suitability, and these criteria are accessible to everyone.

As the minister responsible for delivering the majority of projects approved in the capital plan, I have worked closely with the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, whose ministry is also responsible for the budget and capital plan, to develop the Infrastructure Accountability Act. We also worked with all other government ministries and asked government stakeholders – like Alberta Health Services, municipalities, school jurisdictions, job creators, and everyday Albertans – for their input. We received strong support for legislating this criteria and for providing transparency around the capital planning process.

Through the Infrastructure Accountability Act all Albertans will know how government decides what capital projects to approve in their communities, how decisions are made to ensure the best value for taxpayer dollars, and how we align our capital project decisions in the best interest of creating jobs and supporting economic growth. Stakeholders such as school jurisdictions and the municipalities will be able to align their capital project decisions knowing government's criteria and priorities. Job creators will better be able to form their business plans because of government's transparency around capital planning decisions. While these criteria have been used for the past three capital plans, by enshrining them in the legislation, we are tying future governments to the same level of transparency.

The act also legislates roles and responsibilities for government ministries involved in developing annual capital plans, and it formalizes the deputy ministers capital committee, which provides advice on the capital plan. Alberta has no other legislated deputy ministers committees, Mr. Speaker. We are demonstrating a true

commitment to getting politics out of the process when it comes to selecting infrastructure by letting our world-class public servants inform the capital planning process. All government decision-makers will be on the same page when it comes to putting forward capital project submissions.

The Infrastructure Accountability Act also legislates the development and release of a 20-year strategic capital plan, which has to be updated at least every four years. This plan will provide strategic direction beyond the annual capital plan. It's going to be long-term, our strategic plan, Mr. Speaker. It will be a key driver in making sound long-term decisions in public infrastructure. The plan will look at how capital infrastructure-related trends may impact Alberta and, considering those trends, will provide direction on how government can best meet future infrastructure needs. Should Bill 73 pass, we expect to release the 20-year strategic capital plan shortly after it receives royal assent.

Now I would like to address some of the critiques I have heard about the bill from the media. The first criticism I heard is that the act does not mandate that a list of unfunded projects be released every year. Now, every year government releases the capital plan in the budget, and the capital plan includes a project list with a minimum of three years in anticipated spending on each given project. Mr. Speaker, usually capital plans vary from three to five years, but a majority of governments use a four-year capital plan. The capital plan includes the project list, and every year the government also produces an annual infrastructure report detailing progress on every project. No other jurisdiction legislates the release of unfunded project lists.

But let us be clear, Mr. Speaker. Only Ontario and Quebec come even close to what we are doing here. We are providing transparency where it didn't exist before for how projects that did make it into the capital plan were selected; they were evaluated against the six criteria legislated in the Infrastructure Accountability Act. Now, I am sure that when the members opposite were in government, they evaluated projects using certain criteria, too, but the public never knew what those criteria were because they were not public. A school board can now look at these criteria and include their submission to the Ministry of Education by evaluating it through the lens of this publicly available criteria.

Another important aspect of this legislation is that every proposal government receives now needs to take into account the full life cycle cost of each project. While in the past ministries might consider only the upfront construction cost in their project submissions, now years of maintenance must be factored in the planning, and we are legislating a more fulsome accounting for project costs.

3:00

Another criticism might be: what's the point of this legislation? If the government was already using these six criteria to evaluate the capital plan submissions, why does it need to be codified in the legislation? In the newspaper today I saw that the NDP claimed that the bill will not affect this year's capital planning process. In fact, we have used these same criteria for the last two budgets as we were piloting the effectiveness of the criteria, Mr. Speaker. In addition, they claim that they are the criteria by which any government should be selecting infrastructure projects. In fact, these criteria were brought in under the UCP government. Again, we don't know how the NDP evaluated the capital project submissions because they never told Albertans. Alberta taxpayers now have a great deal more transparency.

This legislation, in my view, provides three things: criteria, process, and foresight. A standard has been set, and it won't be easy for future governments to ignore.

Another question I have heard is: how does this legislation create jobs? It's a very important question. For one thing, one of the criteria is the economic impact of the project. That's an important lens through which government will evaluate every project that comes through. Now, are you going to evaluate an elementary school based on its economic impact? I think members can agree that this isn't the most important criterion for an elementary school, but this government has spent unprecedented amounts on irrigation, for instance. Should an irrigation project's evaluation include the economic impact? Absolutely.

Having such legislation also provides job creators with the confidence that Alberta is a transparent jurisdiction with a governance framework and a long-term vision in the form of a 20-year-strategy capital plan. This positions us as a leader and makes Alberta an even more attractive place to do business.

Additionally, I want to be clear that this government has made unprecedented investments in public infrastructure: \$10 billion in the year 2020, \$20.6 billion over the next three years, Mr. Speaker, on top of the \$10 billion in 2020. Alberta taxpayers deserve to know that all that money is being spent on projects that have met objective selection criteria, and that's what this legislation does.

Another criticism, Mr. Speaker, is that this legislation does not entirely reflect our platform commitment to set predictable funding levels. The pandemic taught us that we need flexibility. I was very glad we were able to respond to low oil prices and economic slowdown by accelerating a billion dollars of capital maintenance and renewal. We need the agility to respond to micro- and macroeconomic conditions and emerging needs and trends. If we had been tied to a particular funding level, we would lose the agility we need to respond to market conditions. No other government ties dollar figures to infrastructure spending in legislation, for a good reason.

In closing, Alberta's government is raising the bar for transparent, evidence-based decision-making for capital projects, capital projects that contribute to building a prosperous province where people want to live, work, study, and play. I'm pleased to have developed the Infrastructure Accountability Act in response to recommendations by the MacKinnon panel and with the input from Albertans from many different walks of life and backgrounds. I also want members of this House, for their input developing this Bill 73 – so now I ask all members on both sides of the aisle to support this important legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

We are on Bill 73, Infrastructure Accountability Act, at second reading. Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in our first big debate day back. I just want to quickly comment on some of the things that the minister has already mentioned. Just in regard to the minister's comments around: this is a platform commitment, they did some consulting, they were listening, this is something that they said that they were going to do. Fair enough. I have a quote, though, that I think the minister should review, which is coming from the what-we-heard document that was consulted on with public consultations when it comes to infrastructure. That quote is: "The criteria used to evaluate capital projects should be... defined, consistent, and in [line] with regional and municipal planning." Great. I agree. I think that, you know, capital investments should be in line with regional and municipal planning.

What I see in this piece of legislation, though, is that there's an explicit comment that indicates that municipalities do not need to be

consulted when it comes to capital planning. I'm a little bit concerned about that. I'm concerned about that from two perspectives, one around rural economic development and how that will support municipalities in focusing on their key objectives and ensuring that the capital that is available within this province is actually being invested in the capital projects that they see as benefiting their municipalities and then, on top of that, how this relates to agriculture and how we support agricultural industries to make sure that they have support in the infrastructure and capital projects that they need when it comes to what this government is prioritizing and saying is the regional plan.

Now, the reason I say that is that, as we all know, municipalities end up covering a majority of the costs that are associated with maintaining many of the capital projects once they're built. We know that with major highways. We know that with ring roads. We see that in dugouts, water access, water infrastructure, irrigation canals, et cetera. Yet clearly in Bill 73 we don't see a targeted and a concrete plan to ensure that municipalities are consulted through the process of the capital project development. Now, the reason that that's a problem is that, like I've said, when we start seeing mass agricultural movements happening when it comes to harvest, we see big pieces of equipment moving between our counties and through rural Alberta. We also know that municipalities then have to figure out how they're going to continue to maintain those roadways, those secondary highways, those dugouts to ensure that we don't have washouts during floods, and that all primarily falls on the municipalities to figure out.

Why, then, do we see in Bill 73 that they're not being considered? The government is actually rejecting the very advice that they received through their what-we-heard document and through their consultations. I mean, I would think that for the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry as well as the Associate Minister of Rural Economic Development this would be a pretty major thing that they would want to be a part of, that they would want to ensure the municipalities are being heard, that our key economic sectors such as agriculture are being listened to, and that any project that's being developed that could potentially support the economic development within those communities is being considered. Yet, again, in this piece of legislation municipalities have been excluded.

And we've seen this historically. I mean, the critic for Municipal Affairs will probably stand up and speak to that at some point, to talk about the fact that what we continuously keep seeing from this government is a cut to funding for municipalities, removal of their voices from consultation, and very much a top-down provincial perspective of: "We're going to decide what makes sense. We're not going to listen to the people of rural Alberta. We're not going to listen to the rural municipalities. We're going to decide as the government, as the provincial government, that we know better." Yet clearly they were told that capital projects should be defined and consistent and aligned with regional development and municipal planning.

3:10

So why isn't it in the bill? Why is it excluding municipalities from this planning process, and how does that then support the economic future of our province? When agricultural producers come to the minister and they say, "Well, we have capital; we want to invest in these projects, but we need the following things to make them successful; we need infrastructure, we need water access, we need highway access; we need the ability to be able to work with the municipalities to talk about, if we were to invest, what that looks like for land access," they're not included in the capital project.

Does that mean, then, Mr. Speaker, that the minister will just ultimately decide, that the Minister of Infrastructure will say: "Well,

we've decided that this is going to happen. We don't care that in future the municipalities are ultimately going to be responsible for drainage, for making sure of fresh water access, for making sure we have appropriate grey water management, that we're going to make sure that the land that is being provided by the province is meeting within the municipal jurisdictions, that there won't be conflict between agricultural producers and those local municipalities and those individuals living within those communities." I don't see anything in this bill that speaks to that.

So why would the government then say, "Well, we consulted"? Any of the consultation and the feedback that have been received isn't reflected in this piece of legislation. In fact, the total cost of these projects, the long-term planning of these projects, the impacts that it's going to have on these different municipalities are not being reflected. In fact, as we look at budgets over and over and over again over the last couple of years, we're actually seeing a decrease in funding in relation to those. We're seeing a redistribution and a re-evaluation of MGAs, which are the government agreements between the municipalities. Maybe that's why it was done. Maybe the reason that the MGA was reviewed and this government decided to make significant changes was because they knew that this piece of legislation was going to be coming forward and that, in fact, they wanted to be able to have the full control on the capital plan without interference from counties and from those municipalities.

But what I don't see is that these capital plans and this piece of legislation are actually addressing any type of economic development. In fact, what I see it doing is that it's actually removing the ability for the municipalities to decide what their economic future will look like and how they will invest in their capital projects, how they will bring an economic future to their local communities, and how they will be heard by this government in setting the priorities of the municipalities to make sure that it all makes sense. Not to consult, not to align the regional municipal plans with the capital plan from the province is a significant disconnect from what is the reality going on across the province.

It can't just be these urban capital plans. Ring roads, extensions of major highways around Calgary and Edmonton are great, and of course they're needed for transportation. They're needed for movement of goods and addressing our trade partners and access to the airports. I get all of that. But there are major infrastructure projects that need to happen in rural Alberta that need to be supported by this government through a partnership with municipalities. What does the economic future look like based on this piece of legislation? What are the capital plans?

In fact, a capital plan was tabled in this Legislature only nine months ago, I'd say, somewhere around that time. Does that capital plan now get redone? Is that being honoured with the changes of this legislation? How does that capital plan today, the one that was provided to the Legislature, the one that was provided to the current municipalities that are hoping that they're going to have access to those pieces of infrastructure – are they going to be honoured? Or does this bill now say that all of those capital plans and all those future investments that were promised no longer are valid?

The timing of this bill is also a little bit strange. It's not aligned with the capital plan. It's not aligned with a future budget, and it doesn't speak to the commitments that have already been made by this government to those municipalities, to Albertans to know what their future infrastructure is going to be. Municipalities have based their budget on the budget of this government and on the infrastructure plan of this government.

I have questions that I would appreciate the minister speaking to, but I would also like to know, across all the different ministers in the cabinet, how they feel about how this is going to impact the work that they need to do. We would see consultation needed to be

required with Indigenous communities about capital projects. I don't see Indigenous communities being highlighted in this piece of legislation and what that would mean for the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and how that will impact his work and looking at providing capital plans to First Nations communities.

I don't see anything around agriculture. I see economic projects, but what do economic projects look like? Who gets to define what the future of the economy looks like if the municipalities aren't being consulted? If industry isn't being consulted, is that just oil and gas? Does that include agriculture? Does that include AI? Does that include tech? Does that include our hydrogen and lithium projects? How does that relate back to the structure of how this bill is written?

Again, I think that there is a very high-level, very top-down perspective where the minister solely gets to decide where these projects get to be built and who gets to build them. It doesn't include consultation. It doesn't speak to the other stakeholders across the province and their wishes or responsibilities. All it speaks to is "the minister shall," the responsibility of the minister that there will be departments. What I don't understand is why the municipal legislation isn't included in this, why Indigenous consultations are not included in these pieces of legislation. And then: what are the priorities? A 20-year strategic capital plan is a long vision to not include municipalities. It doesn't tell them where the money is going to come from and who's going to maintain these projects as they are built, and that is where ultimately the financial burden lies, with Albertans and within their municipalities.

Again, I'll just highlight roadways, rural highways, looking at water, looking at dugouts, looking at flood mitigation: all of those things are part of the capital project, yet all of that needs to be done in consultation with municipalities, and I don't see any of that happening here. I would be interested to hear from not only the Minister of Infrastructure but also the minister of economic development, the Associate Minister of Rural Economic Development as well as our postsecondary minister – I just feel like I should highlight him – and just see, you know: when we're looking at those infrastructure settings, how does that work across the cabinet if the consultation isn't required and the sole responsibility only lies with the one minister?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

We are on the third speaker on Bill 73, meaning Standing Order 29.1(1) is now available for interventions going forward.

I see to join debate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 73, the Infrastructure Accountability Act. I have a number of comments. I mean, I've been going through the bill. I appreciate the fact that it's not very long. I do have a number of comments just on this bill. I appreciate, on the one hand, that the minister is attempting to codify what's been already done although it was interesting in his opening remarks that he talked about how this is necessary yet mentioned that the government has been doing this for the last couple of years, so it begs the question of: why now? But I can give an example of why it could look like to Albertans that they're trying to close the barn doors after all of the animals have escaped.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, this bill: at first read I thought that maybe this bill could have prevented the \$1.3 billion gamble that this government made on the Keystone XL pipeline.. Albertans will remember and do remember that this government wasted, gambled \$1.3 billion

taxpayer dollars on the U.S. presidential election. Irresponsible, it's been described as. I mean, you know, Albertans have used different adjectives to describe it. But upon a second look at this bill, it's my understanding that as the bill is currently written, it still would not prevent another \$1.3 billion gamble. It's a loophole in this bill that is quite significant, and I'm going to talk about a few others.

I appreciate the spirit of the bill, but we all know in this place and we've all been here long enough to recognize that unless it is written in very, very clear language and is spelled out, there are ways around it. The minister is talking about how this is setting a criteria for how capital planning submissions will be evaluated. What is not in this bill, Mr. Speaker, are definitions of the criteria. You see, as a teacher, teachers provide students with rubrics so that they know what constitutes an A or a B or a C. It's spelled out. It's crystal clear. In the bill as it's currently written, there may be criteria – we talk about, you know, in section 4(a) “whether the . . . program is expected to decrease risks to the health and safety or security of Albertans.” Okay; that's great. But how is a project actually evaluated, one project over another, on how well they will do that? Is it a sliding scale? What is the description of the evaluation tool?

In here is the economic impact which, you know, I think absolutely needs to be part of the criteria, the economic impact. We have a partial definition as far as the direct and indirect jobs that are associated. Again, are we talking job numbers, or are we talking FTEs? Are we talking about additional jobs that would be created or affected through an infrastructure project that would potentially attract other businesses? That's not clear in the current bill, Mr. Speaker.

For me at the moment one of the areas that I'm most concerned that's missing – and I hope that the minister will look at this as an opportunity to fix and possibly will bring forward an amendment. But in this, one of the differences between Ontario and Alberta – and my colleague the Member from Edmonton-Manning pointed this out. In Ontario in their legislation is criteria or it codifies that in the process of capital planning and how projects are evaluated they work with municipalities. There is an alignment. This is a glaring omission, Mr. Speaker. If we want to look at ways to maximize our dollars and respect orders of government, then they need to be in here.

If you ask me, under the previous government one of our programs was a regional and community economic support program that awarded additional points – so there was a scoring system; there were metrics – to municipalities that collaborated as a region because what we noted was that Alberta has over 340 different municipalities in the province of Alberta, 340 municipalities all competing to attract investment, to attract companies. Those that are the most successful, Mr. Speaker, are ones that collaborate on a bigger basis or more broadly than just the individual municipality. Here in this bill what concerns me is that not just municipalities but some of the regional economic development associations are not included in this.

For example, out of the city of Calgary, Calgary Economic Development is the economic development arm of our largest city in the province. You would think that in Calgary, both their economic development arm and the municipality, the leaders that are elected at the local level would have opportunities to provide input into the priority list of capital funding. Now, I'm sure at some point the minister will get up and talk about how we will consult with these different stakeholders, but the minister also knows that if it's not codified in legislation, then at worst it's lip service; at best it could potentially be a phone call or some way of reaching out. But if we're codifying the process to approve projects or how they get on a list, then I would argue it is equally as important to include who is on that list of consultation, who will be involved to not just provide submissions but to actually work collaboratively.

Governments talk about that all the time, yet when rubber hits the road, often they fall short.

I'd like to see in this bill – you know, I appreciate that there is a section that talks about alignment between capital planning submissions. I think that's positive to the minister and government, that there is a whole-of-government approach. My colleague from Edmonton-Manning talked about agriculture and forestry and the role for the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation in this. I think there needs to be more of an emphasis on a whole-of-government approach and not housing different projects or programs in specific ministries that operate in isolation of each other.

I think that there's still much work that needs to be done, so I would argue that in addition to looking at co-ordinating the different ministries, there is an opportunity here to co-ordinate with the regional economic development associations, to co-ordinate with the municipalities as an entity, as an order of government but also with municipalities, their own economic development agencies. Here in Edmonton we have Edmonton Global, down in Calgary we have Calgary Economic Development, and then of course the many, many smaller economic development agencies that exist.

In fact, I'll direct the minister to take a look at Lethbridge. Lethbridge is really an incredible example of different entities that have come together to successfully plan their future. I've said this to Team Lethbridge for years now, that their model really should be replicated around the province. They bring together the municipality, their economic development agency, their college and the university, so their postsecondaries. They bring in the REDA, the regional economic development alliance. They're all at the table having a conversation, so you have business talking to postsecondaries to ensure that they understand what the needs and demands are, what the skills are that they're going to need from their graduates. You have the city and the county there to look at the whole region as far as what are their priorities, what investments are they trying to attract, what infrastructure dollars could they possibly use or need from the government.

I'll give you a great example of a government that listened to that. Of course, it was the previous NDP government. When you look at the Cavendish investment – and I encourage the minister to look at this – it was a number of different ministries, from Infrastructure to agriculture to economic development to Environment and Parks, that all came together working with the town, the county, their economic development agency to see what could be done as a Team Alberta approach. Now, I appreciate that ministers and members on the other side like to talk about Team Alberta, but I think that there are limited examples that I've seen and that I've heard through stakeholders where there is truly a Team Alberta approach. But the Cavendish example is one of those examples. Truth be told, as members know in this House, I will give credit where credit is due. If that was an initiative brought in under this current government or a different government, I would still give them credit because it took that whole-of-government approach, working with the local entities. So I'd encourage the minister to look at a way to codify that involvement, that process.

3:30

The other question I have – and I'm not sure how much time I have left in my comments, Mr. Speaker, but one of the concerns that we've heard in the past and that continues is around the issue of procurement. Now, government dollars: governments spend significant money. I appreciate that this bill is about infrastructure, but I think that there is an opportunity here to ensure that the procurement process doesn't unfairly bias the companies who traditionally, regularly receive contracts from government.

We've heard and I've heard that there are a lot of smaller companies that struggle to get onto that procurement list, whether or not that's a culture within the different departments that needs to be improved upon or if there need to be more specific guidelines. In this, as well, I don't see innovation being one of the criteria for evaluating projects as far as tapping into creative solutions to challenges we face.

I'm happy to give the member 60 seconds.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you very much, Member. To be honest, I wanted to try this. I do appreciate you bringing up the topic of procurement. It is always a challenge to get that balance right, to not overemphasize the ability of large, established companies to bid on it and see an underrepresentation of smaller companies. In the hope of collaboration I was wondering if you would speak to: how do you see finding that balance between allowing new competition into the market while still allowing those who are established to continue their specialization in whatever project? If the member would care to speak to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Before the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview speaks, I indicated to you that you had three minutes. That's not quite necessarily correct, so just for the benefit of everybody here he has currently another minute and 44 seconds. If there was another intervention that was taken, then actually another two minutes would be added to your time as well, just as part of this learning that we're all doing.

Hon. member, could you please continue?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and I appreciate even the ballpark of what I have. I'll thank the Member for Lethbridge-East for his question.

You know, with procurement I don't know if there's a simple answer, but I do think part of it is establishing criteria that needs to go beyond: who can do it for the cheapest cost? Now, I recognize that that is a factor. I'm not saying that shouldn't be part of the criteria, but what about companies that are looking at using different or more innovative products or practices?

I know that on the construction side there were companies that, I believe – and I hope I don't mess this up – on the use of concrete, the materials have to all be new, that none can be recycled. And I remember meeting with some industry who said that if we were able to use a percentage of recycled products, it'd be better for the environment. You'd have, you know, a greener footprint, and it actually would result in being more cost efficient. But, again, the current legislation is written such that they cannot use recycled materials at all.

You know, a tiny example, I think, is looking at how we can be more innovative in our procurement practices, but I also believe that it is an issue of culture and ensuring that those who are making those decisions have a clear rubric or set of criteria that they're evaluating companies on and that they're encouraged to look local, to support Alberta companies here in the province before looking elsewhere.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I just want to take a moment to draw attention to the fact that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has made history as the first individual in this House to complete an intervention, and obviously you were the first to respond.

Are there any members wishing to join debate on Bill 73? I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has risen.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I did not mean to take any of the credit away from the hon. member across the

aisle, and I do appreciate the topic that he did bring up on procurement. It is a personal passion of mine. Though it's not in my prepared notes, I will speak to that a little bit. I believe that some of the language he's looking for – and I would look for his support if this ever came up and if the opportunity for it to come up would be available – is the term “best value.” It's something that I constantly strive to understand better, to make sure my colleagues understand so that we can get the best value for Albertans. And it's not just the lowest cost; it can take into consideration the length of the lifespan of the materials used or the amount of materials, as the member indicated, that were restored, renewed, or recycled. I think those are some very key topics, and I look forward to that continued conversation with the member under the new intervention style.

I do think he also raises a very salient point in terms of looking for local contractors. Unfortunately, much of the language on some of our international and interprovincial contracts and agreements very much limits that kind of, shall I say, favouritism towards those we would like to see. I do look forward to more debate that could allow for the understanding of the value that local businesses do provide in a number of other ways. We'll have to get creative and innovative in our debate so that we can possibly come to a solution that serves Albertans even better as we move forward.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to Bill 73. This morning my daughter drove to her public high school in Lethbridge, and my wife went to work at the Chinook regional hospital, and my son went to his university campus here in Edmonton. As mundane and routine as these actions seem, they are all great examples of just how much our lives are impacted by infrastructure, and that's why Bill 73 is so vitally important. This legislation will help the government of Alberta make critical capital project investment decisions and provide Albertans with that much-needed infrastructure.

If passed, the Infrastructure Accountability Act legislates the release of a 20-year strategic capital plan which must be updated every four years. I must say that this particular part of the act is one of my personal favourites to support. I believe it is essential in terms of good government planning to look beyond the possible four-year mandates that the government currently works on to set a larger and a longer term vision so that people understand the priorities about their date, they transparently can see those projects listed years in advance and understand as those projects come up and get completed, the movement of their particular project as it moves up that list in that 20-year plan, moving to 18 years, 14 years, 12, and so on, and seeing that project rise on the priority list. I look forward to seeing that in action.

This act demonstrates our government's commitment to being transparent, accountable, and unbiased when making capital plan decisions while at the same time setting up the decision-making process to outlast political parties of any given election. We are prioritizing the needs of Albertans to have access to consistent planning and decision-making processes for vital infrastructure projects in their communities. I believe the member opposite also did a good job, as did the member before him, on talking about the criteria needed for capital planning submissions. I look forward to that.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to speaking further to this debate as Bill 73 moves through the House, as it's a passion of mine. I thank you and all members for their time today, but at this point I'd like to adjourn debate on Bill 73.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I would just state that it may or may not move its way through the House.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

3:40

Bill 49
Labour Mobility Act

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I see the hon. Premier, President of Executive Council and Minister of Intergovernmental Relations has risen to debate.

Mr. Kenney: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to rise in support of Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act. This is a bill that I have a deep personal interest in. I think it's hugely important for the future of Alberta's economy, and it could be for Canada's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the dream of Confederation was, first and foremost, of an economic union in 1867, and when Alberta exceeded to the federation as a province in September 1905, it did so with the expectation of entering an economic union. But regrettably, in this federation we see more restrictions on the movement of goods, services, and people than amongst the 28 sovereign member states of the European Union. That, I submit, is a betrayal of the vision of Confederation, and it has very real life consequences for people. It makes us all poor. Every restriction on the movement of goods, services, and people has an economic cost, and those costs add up enormously. In fact, some economists have estimated that the total negative economic impact of interprovincial barriers to goods, services, and labour could be quantified by as much as \$130 billion in costs to our economy and tens and tens of thousands of jobs. The Labour Mobility Act is a bold and historic effort by Alberta, should it be passed, to effectively strike down any remaining barriers to labour mobility for the province of Alberta in welcoming Canadians from the other nine provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I am conscious that I am moving this bill at second reading on the very same day that Elections Alberta has published the results of last week's referendum on equalization, where Albertans spoke clearly and loudly in favour of a fair deal in the federation, with 62 per cent of voters supporting an amendment to the Canadian constitution to strike the principle of equalization as an important statement, a political and legal fact, that together we have created to demand fairness in a federation where we have made an outsized contribution.

At the same time, I want to convey to members of the Assembly and fellow Albertans that in pressing for fairness in the federation and pressing for equalization reform, reform of other federal transfers, in vigorously defending our constitutional jurisdiction, including our ownership, control of our natural resources, in fighting for our right to develop our economy and do so in an environmentally responsible way, in doing all of those things, we are not as Albertans narrowminded, parochial provincialists. We are, I submit, with the exception, perhaps, of a very small number of people committed to making Alberta a separate country – with that exception, I believe the vast majority of Albertans are big Canadians, are patriotic, and I believe that this is the most Canadian of provinces.

As I pointed out before, this is the only Assembly that displays all of the provincial flags, a wonderful reflection of our patriotism, our friendship with our fellow Canadians from coast to coast. We're the most Canadian province not because of these flags but because of our people.

We have a greater percentage of Canadians born outside of our province than any other jurisdiction in the country. Let me restate that more simply: there are more Albertans who were born outside of our province, Canadians who moved here, than is the case for any other province. So we are a reflection in a very real way of this country and every one of those fellow Canadians who chose

Alberta, who are Albertans by choice and not chance, who came here to participate in our opportunity society, to work hard, to prosper, those who reinforced our historic entrepreneurial culture by coming here from all across Canada. They have helped to fuel the growth and economic diversification of modern Alberta. Our province has more than doubled in our population since 1985, in the last roughly 40 years, Mr. Speaker, and that has been the single greatest contributing factor to diversification of our economy as they have driven demand in services like in the services industry, in construction, in home building, and in so many other sectors.

Of course, so many of those new Albertans – I shouldn't say new Albertans. I mean, so many of those Canadians who chose Alberta are the folks who brought their work ethic and ingenuity, yes, to developing our oil and gas resources in our traditional industries. So the vitality, the prosperity of modern Alberta is closely connected to the patterns of migration: yes, newcomers from around the world who have joined us but also Canadians from coast to coast who have done so as well. And, of course, in this province we welcome them all with open arms.

One of the things I love most about Alberta – you know, down east, Mr. Speaker, they have a saying in the east coast provinces that if you weren't born there but you moved there, you're a come from away. You're a CFA. Oh, the fellow: he's a CFA. That means you moved there, and even if you've been there for 40 or 50 years, your whole life, if you were born somewhere else – and it's done in a lighthearted fashion. It's not xenophobic. It's just a lighthearted recognition that you might not have been born and – that's not the Alberta attitude at all. I often, when I meet people who've moved from across the country, say, "How long have you been here?" They say, "Well, I just came in six months ago." "Well, you're a true-blue Albertan now." That's, I think, the attitude of this province: welcoming, knowing that people come here to work hard and pursue opportunity. So if we want to ensure our future prosperity, we must continue to attract and welcome hard-working people who have that entrepreneurial instinct, and that's what the Labour Mobility Act, Bill 49, is all about. I look at one of my friends here: born and raised in Nova Scotia, knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Mr. Speaker, I started by talking about the balkanization, the barriers to the mobility of goods and services and people in the country, which is a real shame. According to the experts, all of the think tanks, the academics, the economists who have looked at this issue of interprovincial barriers for many years, they identify that the single costliest aspect of interprovincial barriers or the lack of free trade and movement in Canada is around labour mobility.

I got in trouble once for using a phrase, Mr. Speaker. I probably will again. It's a standard economic phrase. It shouldn't be regarded as something that's controversial. It's the concept of human capital, which is to say the acquired skills and knowledge that people have which they can bring in to the workforce. More and more modern economists are recognizing that the most important aspect of capital in an economy, more important even than financial capital, is human capital, that is to say the skills and abilities that people have and bring to their work.

Mr. Speaker, in this respect Canada has a patchwork regulatory framework for the recognition of people's learning, of their skills, of their credentials. We have in this country, depending on the province, about a hundred regulated professions or trades. Now, about 45 of those typically are professions – doctors, lawyers, nurses, chiropractors, optometrists, and so forth – and about 55 of those are trades, which are typically more practical vocations. I say practical; I mean that often people in the trades require higher levels of education and increasingly high levels of applied science and

math. So, as you know, it is critical that we honour trades as being equivalent in prestige and status in our society as professions.

3:50

Now, having said that, we have over 400 regulatory bodies across the country for these various trades and professions, and they all have different rules. Like, here in Alberta we have the college of physicians and the Law Society and the college of dentists and the trades. Each of them has their own specific regulatory organization. They all have criteria to evaluate whether an individual has the relevant knowledge and experience, human capital, to work safely in that field, and that is important. It is necessary.

This government does not like red tape, but we do recognize – and that’s why we’ve eliminated some 118,000 Alberta government rules – that to ensure safety, to ensure consumer protection, to ensure a high level of confidence in professional services and in tradespeople, we do need regulation of those occupations and that regulation establishes a high standard. It maintains the prestige of those occupations. It’s all important. We are not proposing, to be clear, in the labour mobility bill to eliminate or to diminish the very high levels of professional and trade certification in Alberta. Rather, the goal of the bill is simply this: to eliminate any unnecessary barriers to the entry into Alberta’s job market of credentialed workers from across the country.

The principle is this, Mr. Speaker. If you’re visiting relatives or friends over in British Columbia and you get a toothache and you have to go to the dentist, you go to that dentist and you don’t ask to see whether they are certified with the Alberta college of dentists simply because you’re an Albertan. You assume, quite rightly, that that is a Canadian-certified dentist and that they are going to give you a professional service at a high level of safety. If the Member for West Yellowhead is back visiting relatives in Nova Scotia and he falls ill and has to go into a medical clinic, he doesn’t ask if the doctor is certified with the Alberta College of Physicians & Surgeons. He trusts the Nova Scotia regulatory system. So if that doctor chooses to join us here in Alberta or that dentist moves to this province, why then suddenly do we force them, in too many instances, to go through a whole separate certification process?

[The Speaker in the chair]

The principle of Bill 49 is that we are saying to the professional regulatory organizations, the roughly hundred regulators of these occupations – and I’m just putting this in plain English – that you must automatically grant Alberta certification or validate the other provinces’ certification for Canadians who are migrating to Alberta as quickly as possible. In fact, what the bill says – I’ll actually quote from a couple of the relevant sections. It says right here in the first substantive section, section 2:

A regulatory body shall ensure that its registration practices and registration decisions in respect of a labour mobility applicant to whom any domestic trade agreement that is in force in Alberta applies are consistent with that domestic trade agreement.

Now, that’s referring, Mr. Speaker, really to two primary agreements: the New West Partnership agreement, which is a legal platform for, amongst other things, a high level of labour mobility in the four western provinces, but this also brings in the Canada free trade agreement, which also has commitments, in principle, to mutual recognition of provincial credentials.

Then section 2(2):

A regulatory body shall ensure that its registration practices and registration decisions in respect of a labour mobility applicant to whom a prescribed intergovernmental agreement applies are consistent with the prescribed intergovernmental agreement.

So we’re basically saying – for the first time ever in law we’re telling our professional regulatory bodies that they are obliged to respect our legal commitments on labour mobility.

But here is section 3. This is perhaps the pith and substance of the bill.

A regulatory body has a duty to carry out registration practices and registration decisions in respect of labour mobility applicants that are transparent, objective, impartial and procedurally fair.

And in section 7:

Where a labour mobility applicant has provided proof of certification to a regulatory body and has met all of the other requirements imposed by the regulatory body . . . the regulatory body shall register that . . . applicant without restrictions, limitations or conditions.

That’s the key of the bill, Mr. Speaker. We are telling them in law – the Law Society, the college of physicians, all the nurses, the engineers, all of these groups – that they must certify people who have credentials from other provinces without restrictions, limitations, or conditions.

Finally, we’ve laid down timelines, very tight timelines. I know that some of the PROs, professional regulatory organizations, won’t like this, but frankly, Mr. Speaker, we believe that there is a compelling economic interest and that if you can move from Portugal to Ireland as a certified nurse and begin practising virtually the next day, why can’t you do it between Saskatchewan and Alberta? We’re saying to these organizations that we respect you, we appreciate the good work that you do, and we thank you for maintaining high standards. We want you to continue to do all of that. But we’re simply saying that we as the Legislature, as the lawmakers, trust the Canadian standard from coast to coast.

Now, there are exceptions that are permitted here. I won’t go into too much technical detail, but we do recognize that there are in some cases different scopes of practice within different provinces. I’ll give you one example. In some provinces dental hygienists are certified to administer local anaesthetics for dental surgery; in other provinces they’re not. That might be an example of a significant difference in scope of practice, in which case it’s reasonable for the regulator of Alberta dental hygienists to ensure that somebody coming from another province has that skill, so they might send them for an additional course, but it has to be a limited, legitimate, compelling reason why they would not automatically recognize certification.

In terms of the timelines I point to section 8(3). It says that, “A regulatory body shall, within 10 business days after making a registration decision in respect of a labour mobility applicant, provide written communication of the . . . decision to the applicant.” Then it goes on to say that – actually, I’ll back this up. “A regulatory body shall, within 10 days after receiving an application . . . provide a written acknowledgement of receipt,” and then within 20 business days they must make the decision.

Basically, just to simplify it, if this bill passes unamended, we will be creating a 40-day maximum processing timeline from receipt of application to approval and informing the applicant. I think that’s reasonable. It should be enough time for the regulators to simply validate that the person has real credentials from the other province. What we’re saying is that they don’t need to go through a whole individual substantive, separate review. They don’t need to put this person through more tests.

Goodness knows that in some of these occupations people coming here have to wait for months and sometimes years to get through the red tape. Our colleague, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont is the government of Alberta’s liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces. He tells me – I know this as a former Minister of National Defence – that many of the spouses of Canadian military personnel are caught in this trap because the

military personnel are transferred a lot around the country to different bases, and their spouses move with them to support them. So you get a family from CFB Petawawa that would move to CFB Edmonton. The spouse often works in a regulated profession. They show up here in Edmonton, and they have to start, in a sense, their careers all over again. And it can take months or longer for them to get certification. This isn't right.

4:00

Now, we've actually gone to the regulatory bodies and said: could you please give, you know, kind of special consideration for the military families because they're serving our country? But let's do this for all families that come to Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Forty days should be plenty enough time for the regulators to get this done, constituting basically automatic certification of the credentials of somebody moving here.

Now, you know, people might say: well, this all sounds like pretty technical stuff; it doesn't mean a lot. Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, the costliest part of barriers between the provinces is on labour mobility. A very interesting study was published by the Conference Board of Canada in 2015 entitled *Brain Gain 2015: The State of Canada's Learning Recognition System*, and if people are really interested in the issue, I commend the report to them. In this report the Conference Board gives an estimate of the cost of these barriers within the country to labour mobility. They estimate that improving Canada's credential recognition system could increase the annual incomes of those affected workers by an average of \$15,000 to \$20,000, totalling an excess of \$3 billion for those with out-of-province credentials, and about 260,000 Canadians move from one province to another each year. They further say that one of the key barriers to interprovincial migration is migration costs. This includes delay in certification recognition.

Actually, now I'm quoting from the report of the C.D. Howe Institute, that our government commissioned last year, entitled *Alberta's Opportunity: The Ins, Outs and Benefits of Greater Job Mobility*. They estimate that reducing migration costs by about \$500 a person per year would attract about 20,000 additional workers to Alberta and increase the overall provincial economy by \$2.8 billion, or .8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, to quote from the C.D. Howe Institute report, "Alberta, in short, can promote economic revival and long-term economic growth by ensuring that it is the most welcoming jurisdiction to talented workers and entrepreneurs from across Canada." That is our vision. That is advanced by this bill.

Mr. Speaker, let me address now what I believe is one of the greatest emerging economic challenges that we are facing as a province, and that is the issue of access to labour. In the last month or so I have done Zoom meetings with about 20 of the province's largest industry associations – construction, road builders, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the association of oil field drillers and contractors, the Petroleum Services Association, hoteliers, Restaurants Canada, the Retail Council of Canada members in Alberta, and on and on, about two dozen of those – and in those meetings there have been dozens and dozens of their corporate members, their business members, so I have been speaking directly or indirectly to hundreds of the province's largest employers in the past few weeks. Every single one of them reports that their single largest challenge and barrier to growth right now is a shortage of labour. I see a lot of members nodding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't yet have labour market information, hard data, that would validate this, and I must confess, there is a paradox that we must address as a province. The paradox is that we still have 8 per cent unemployment. We've been through five tough years, 20 brutal months, and too many Albertans are out of work.

Our first priority must be getting those folks to work. We've got to bridge them in to gainful employment. That's what we are trying to do with programs like jobs now, the largest ever government investment in job training to link the unemployed into the growing number of available jobs.

In some cases this may mean career shifts for people. In other cases it may mean skills upgrading or skills updating. Some people will have spent much of the past 18 or 20 months at home, and they've been reconsidering what they're going to do next and maybe changing gears in terms of their career path. We are there to support them in those choices with programs like jobs now, a record investment. In fact, we are spending 400 million tax dollars this year on job training programs plus another \$400 million, 50-50 with the federal government, on the jobs now program, so \$800 million that we are investing in skills development in Alberta.

We also have the Minister of Advanced Education leading Alberta's very exciting skills for jobs strategy, which is to retool our vocational training and postsecondary education systems to support strong labour market outcomes, basically to deliver people the skills that they need to succeed in the economy of today and the future, and we believe that means a much bigger emphasis on experiential learning, practical learning, microcredentials on vocations and trades, not just academic formation and professions, as important as those are. I want to thank and commend the hon. the minister for his visionary leadership in this regard.

We are also, to address these emerging labour shortages, Mr. Speaker – the Minister of Labour and Immigration, and prior to him the current Minister of Health, is working with the hon. Member for Calgary-North, the associate minister of immigration, on the implementation of the Alberta advantage immigration strategy, which is a modernization of the Alberta immigrant nominee program, better to identify, recruit, and attract skilled newcomers from around the world.

All of that is good, Mr. Speaker, but we need to do more when it comes to promoting domestic labour mobility. Now, as you know, I talked earlier about how Alberta's population doubled in 40 years, and that drove so much growth. But since about 2005, coincidentally the beginning of the previous NDP government, we started to see a reversal in the trends of interprovincial migration towards Alberta. I believe that that is now coming to an end. In fact, I was speaking to one of Alberta's largest home builders recently, and he said that they cannot build enough houses for the demand that we are seeing in Alberta's housing market right now. He estimated that there are about a hundred families every week moving to Calgary alone from southern Ontario.

I mean, I know two or three; one relative, a former staffer, and a friend in the last month have all informed me that they've given up on the insane housing market and the congestion and – well, I don't want to spend too long bashing Toronto here. They've given up on that, and they want to have a fresh beginning in this land of opportunity with lower taxes, with a stronger economy, with more affordable housing, with great-quality public services, with our magnificent natural environment. So I think we are starting to see the wheel turn on interprovincial migration coming back net-net to Alberta. Last year – and this is the amazing thing about this province – while we were the hardest hit in COVID economically because we had the global COVID recession and then we had the collapse of energy prices – we were the hardest hit with the possible exception of Newfoundland and Labrador – and yet we were one of only two provinces whose population grew, so that is encouraging.

By the way, another interesting factoid, Mr. Speaker: last year we saw record numbers of new business incorporations, in 2020, during a double recession. I think nothing speaks more powerfully to the entrepreneurial culture of this province. How typically

Albertan. You lose your job, you're in the midst of a massive global crisis, and what do you do? You go out and start a new business. That's the Alberta spirit, and those are the kind of people who, once again, are coming here. We need to help them get to work the moment they arrive. We don't want them wasting any of their skills or talent or education, and that is why this bill is so important as part of our broader labour force strategy.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, I won't be much longer. I just wanted to give a little more context. In July 2019, about three months after this government had been sworn in and elected, I attended the Council of the Federation meeting in Saskatoon – it's the all-the-Premiers meeting – and I said to my colleagues there that Alberta, at least under this government, was sick and tired of waiting and haggling over the goal of free trade in Canada. I said: we are just going to start acting because we believe, as free traders in this province, that it is to our own advantage to knock down those barriers unilaterally. I announced at that meeting that Alberta was dropping 85 per cent of our exceptions to trade and mobility under the Canada free trade agreement, eliminating all of our exceptions with respect to government procurement, and it's right. I've been attacked by the NDP for having done that unilaterally, but we know that free trade creates more wealth and more opportunity, and protection is the path to poverty, so we did that unilaterally.

I also told my colleagues, the other Premiers, that we would study the possibility of unilateral and automatic recognition of learning credentials and skills from across the country. We made that commitment in summer 2019, and we went to work. We sponsored this really good study from the C.D. Howe Institute, which I commend to the House.

Actually, we were hoping to introduce this bill about a year ago, in the fall of 2020, but we were still so hard hit with double-digit unemployment that we just thought it would be, frankly, the wrong timing to bring this forward, when people couldn't really move anyway because of the COVID context and such high unemployment at that point.

Now, some will say to us – and, you know, I think it's predictable. Some will say: well, we still have 8 per cent unemployment; why are you promoting people coming here? Well, we've never taken a beggar-thy-neighbour approach in this province, Mr. Speaker. A rising tide lifts all boats, and to borrow an Alberta hockey metaphor from Wayne Gretzky, you've got to skate to where the puck is going. And where the puck is going in this province is a very strong period of, I believe, sustained high economic growth.

I think that a year from now we're going to be talking about the Alberta boom. This economy is expanding this year by something like 6.4 per cent, leading the country in economic growth. Every economist think tank projects that we will be leading the country in economic growth in 2022. We are second only to British Columbia in job growth in 2021. We have seen the creation of 60,000 net new jobs over the past three months, 90,000 net new jobs since the beginning of this year, and I think we're just getting started, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in question period today – and I know our friends opposite hate this good news. It's like good economic news for them seems to be like dangling garlic in front of a vampire. They flee in the other direction. But I invite our colleagues and friends in the NDP to join with us in celebrating the job creation and economic growth and new-found investment that is reviving Alberta's economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is the best year on record in Alberta's forestry industry. I look at the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. There's a big forestry industry in his constituency and region. Record

profits, but it's not just about price. We have seen a significant shift of capital from the B.C. forest industry to the Alberta forest industry, and not coincidentally. I see our Minister of Ag and Forestry is joining us, and he can confirm this. This is because the B.C. New Democrats have layered on more and more and more red tape, and this government has been cutting and cutting and cutting red tape.

This minister has given them, per our platform, an access-to-fibre guarantee. They don't know if they're going to have the fibre to make those investments and new plans. I'm looking at the member – actually a forestry worker: the Member for West Yellowhead knows this better than anyone. You can't invest hundreds of millions of dollars in lumber mills if you don't know that you're going to have proximate access to fibre. We have guaranteed them that access to fibre. We have reformed our labour legislation. We are doing everything we can to maintain competitive industrial electricity prices, something we still have to work on, for sure, and of course the job-creation tax cut made us so much more competitive. The best year ever in Alberta forestry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had bad weather for many of our grain farmers this year and livestock producers, but last year was the second-best year in history in terms of farm gate receipts and revenues in the sector. Despite the bad weather this year we are seeing record investments in new agricultural technology and food processing. Every month the Minister of Ag and Forestry sends me an update on his ambitious investment goals.

Mr. Dreeshen: A \$1.4 billion investment target.

Mr. Kenney: A \$1.4 billion investment target.

We're already exceeding the target, and from Lethbridge to La Crête we are seeing new investment in food processing, in agricultural value-added industries. Weather will be good and bad from time to time, but this bodes very well for the future of that historic industry.

Oil and gas: I know another thing they don't like hearing about, Mr. Speaker. It's a small industry, you know. It only employs 800,000 Canadians. I know they can't stand it. They wish we would just surrender like they did to Tzeponah Berman and Steven Guilbeault and all that crowd. This government, the United Conservative Party, was mocked and ridiculed by the cognoscenti, by the people with fashionable opinions, those columnists and academics and left-wing politicians, that we were just a bunch of backward-looking hicks and hillbillies because we were defending the oil and gas industry. They were telling us that it's a legacy industry, we've reached peak oil, there's no more global demand, everybody is going to be driving Teslas, and no one will be consuming hydrocarbon energy. You know the story; we've all heard it.

Mr. Speaker, how wrong they were. This government's strategic defence of our oil and gas industry has been vindicated. I can report to the House that as I speak, west Texas intermediate crude oil is trading at \$84 and WCS, western Canadian select, the key benchmark for our heavy oil, is trading above \$71 for the first time in six years.

I want to thank the Minister of Energy for her leadership in all of this. In fact, she's almost become an adjunct minister for OPEC. She is so well respected in global circles. Mr. Speaker, the associate minister of natural gas is not here, but I think we should give him a bit of credit for natural gas AECO prices being at nearly \$6 today as well.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the phone with the five largest oil sands company CEOs. My friend the Minister of Infrastructure knows them very well because he's a former senior engineer from Suncor. The Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction was a former

executive at Canadian Natural Resources Limited. On this side of the House we understand and fight for our largest industry. Those CEOs told me that we are going to see a significant increase in capital investment, in compensation, and in job creation in that industry over the next two years in this province.

This is the best year ever in our venture capital industry, which is the jet fuel for the digital innovation and start-up space. We are seeing the best year ever by orders of magnitude in the tech and digital industries here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I mean, global giants like Infosys and Mphasis, Indian global giants, have announced with us that they're creating thousands of jobs with new tech centres in Alberta. The Royal Bank of Canada has announced that their new national tech centre of excellence will be located in Alberta, with hundreds of high-paying jobs.

4:20

By the way, these things don't happen by accident, Mr. Speaker. This government was sworn in, I believe, on Tuesday, April 30, 2019. The next day the Minister of Energy and I flew down to Ottawa to fight Bill C-69, and then the day after that I went to Toronto. Two days into this job I was in the corporate suite of the CEO of the Royal Bank, pitching him on the job-creation tax cut, on the Alberta advantage, on deregulation, and on everything. I said: "Why are you operating here? Look at the tax difference. Look at the cost of living. Look at the real estate." And right there, in our second or third day as a government, he said, "You know, you're making a good point." He turned to his COO and said, "Please work with the Premier's team, and let's see what we can do about this."

Mr. Speaker, the creation of Invest Alberta to provide concierge service to these prospective investors: these are the actions that are resulting in these incredible decisions.

Rogers, Mr. Speaker, a company that's right now facing some internal challenges, has announced that in the context of their merger with Shaw, a great Alberta company, they will be investing in a partnership with the University of Calgary. They will be investing in the creation of 500 high-paying jobs in their national telecommunications centre of excellence here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I feel like a kid on Christmas Eve. I know there are some other gifts under the tree that are about to get unwrapped, and they're very exciting. I'm not supposed to peek or let on, but let me just tell you that there will be many glum days for the NDP to come.

You know, one of the biggest things we found under the tree recently in terms of economic opportunity was an announcement by one of the world's largest companies, Dow Chemical, with \$130 billion of annual revenue, operating in over five dozen countries around the world. Dow announced two weeks ago that they have chosen the Edmonton area, Fort Saskatchewan. Do we have the MLA for Fort Sask here, who's worked so hard on this? They will be building the world's first net zero carbon-emitting ethylene cracker and polyethylene plant. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know what the big B number is. I'm not supposed to tell because they haven't gone to their board for a final investment decision, but let me tell you that it is a very big number. They will be creating thousands of upfront jobs, hundreds of permanent jobs, world-leading technology linking in to the Minister of Energy's strategy on carbon capture utilization and sequestration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share because I've got to get this off my chest. I've told some of my colleagues this. When I sat down – it was actually at the Banff global investment forum in, I think, September of 2019. I did a pull aside with the global CEO of Dow, who was there with his Canadian team. They said: "We want to talk to you about potential major investments in Alberta. Now, first things first. Your cut in the business tax rate is why we're having this meeting

right now. This is what got you on the radar screen. You guys need to understand that when we are making decisions on the allocation of tens of billions of dollars of risk capital, we are scoring you against Texas, against Louisiana, against our facilities in West Africa, against our facilities in Southeast Asia. You need to understand that in all of those jurisdictions they have lower construction costs, lower labour costs, a year-round construction season, and greater proximity to markets, so you're starting way behind in the competition, but your job-creation tax cut has brought you into the range of being competitive for this money."

We worked it, Mr. Speaker. We worked it. I mean, I spent two days in Houston with that team. We've had full-time public servants, members of my office solving problems.

You know one thing the NDP opposed? Well, they oppose every good economic policy, but one of them was giving municipalities the ability to offer local tax breaks. That's what they do in Texas and Louisiana. We can be a bunch of Boy Scouts and lose the competition for this investment, or we can actually go head-to-head with the big guys, and that's what we've decided to do. We decided to go big for jobs in Alberta, so we gave municipalities like the Industrial Heartland, out there east of Edmonton – they asked for this power; we gave it to them. The NDP voted against it, predictably, because – you know why they voted against that, Mr. Speaker? Because it might lead to lower taxes. They voted against it.

I don't mind sharing a little inside scoop here. Dow said to us: "This is awesome. This is great, eh? This is going to help out. But you know what? It doesn't apply." The law that we adopted didn't apply to machinery and equipment. "If you really want to be a difference-maker against Texas and Louisiana, it's got to go against M and E."

Mr. Speaker, I was in Houston. I picked up the phone. I called our then Minister of Municipal Affairs, the now Minister of Justice. I said that we need to fix this problem. He brought that amendment into this House, and this caucus passed that into law within one week. I can tell you that Dow was impressed with this government moving at the speed of business. These things are not happening by accident: that is the moral of my story. There are some more big ones to come.

My point is that in traditional industries, ag and forestry and oil and gas, and in emerging industries, like I've talked here about, cutting-edge technology in the petrochemical industry – how about hydrogen? One of the most exciting things happening in this province right now is our colleague the hon. the Minister of Energy's hydrogen strategy, which she's working on with the minister of natural gas. Hydrogen is estimated to be the game-changing fuel of the future that may become a multitrillion-dollar industry.

Alberta is being more and more identified as potentially – well, it will be, I believe – a world leader in the emerging hydrogen industry. That is what the president of Air Products, a global company, said when he announced a \$1.5 billion blue hydrogen project east of Edmonton. He has said publicly that they're likely going to triple that investment. We are in discussions with several major Canadian and international companies on potentially huge capital investments in the hydrogen industry. I know my colleague the Minister of Energy is involved in all of that work. It is really exciting, and it's because, again, of our competitive, yes, access to abundant natural gas as a feedstock and incredibly well-educated workforce. That's where this bill comes in, to grow that workforce.

The visionary leadership of previous Conservative governments in developing carbon capture and storage infrastructure: that was always opposed by the NDP, Mr. Speaker, again always opposing economic progress. A previous Conservative government took a

bold risk on cutting-edge CCWESTT technology, and now the world is knocking on our door because they want to be part of that.

Mr. Speaker, the moral of this story here – and I'll bring it back to this bill – is that we are leading the country in economic growth. I believe that by the end of this calendar year, within the next eight weeks, we will have finally and fully regained the gross domestic product, the economic output of Alberta, as it was before the disaster of the NDP in 2015. We are finally recovering – finally recovering – and then the sky is the limit. The sky is the limit.

Mr. Speaker, in that context we're doing all the right things in terms of economic policy. But there is one thing that increasingly keeps me awake at night in terms of our future economic opportunity, and that is: will we have enough people here to take advantage of all of these new investments? When I talk to these megainvestors, this is one of the first issues they raise with me now: you know, if we do this project and next door some other guys are doing a project of similar scale and you're building a couple of pipelines and you've got hydrogen and you've got petchems and you've got construction generally and you've got upstream exploration in oil and gas and everything else that's going on, how are you going to have enough qualified workers?

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we need to be bold. We need to take leadership. That is why we are doing this unilaterally with the labour mobility bill. I know some will say: well, you just want to give jobs away to people from other provinces. Mr. Speaker, there are going to be more jobs, I think, in the next couple of years than we can adequately address with our labour force today.

4:30

I'll wrap up by saying that this bill underscores our commitment to Canada, our commitment to the economic union, our leadership in the federation. It's also, I think, altruistic in one way for us to go out there and do this unilaterally, but there's a little bit of self-interest in this, too, Mr. Speaker, because every one of those talented, hard-working Canadians that comes and joins us – because they can get their recognition, skills, and experience recognized here automatically, they are going to contribute to our future prosperity. So the message of the Labour Mobility Act is: welcome to Alberta; we're open for business.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill. I think that with respect to this bill, which was introduced yesterday, my inclination at this moment is to view it favourably. I think it has a laudable objective, but there are, in my view, two questions which are always posed of any legislation which comes before the House. The first is: what is the bill's objective? And the second is: does the bill achieve the objective?

Certainly, we've heard a lot of talk about this bill and labour shortages. It is true there are labour shortages in some areas, but a sort of quick glance through schedule 1 in this bill, which is the thing that is being regulated – it doesn't include most of the trades. Now, it's not clear to me why that is because the government communications material clearly lists that those trades are impacted, but they're not actually listed in the bill. So I'm a little curious about how that works.

Now, I do know that under the red seal program there is some ability to move back and forth, but most professions listed in here – I think of engineers and lawyers off the top of my head – have such similar sort of mobility agreements as between their regulating bodies. I would love to hear from the minister or anyone else how exactly that is being accomplished because currently the bill applies to those who are listed in schedule 1 and then persons listed in

schedule 2, and the persons in this instance are ministers. It references directly the ministers. Now, there may be some way in which that is having a collateral impact on professions whose regulatory bodies are impacted under those ministers, so it's possible that that's how it's working.

But in light of the fact that, having read through this, it was not immediately evident to me – and I think it may not be evident to your average Albertan reading it – I would like to know how this applies to those trades because the majority of those skill shortages are in skilled trades. That's sort of where the concern is coming from. So in order for this bill to do the thing which it purports to do, those people definitely need to be covered. I think the sort of first question I have about this bill is sort of how that is being covered, and I hope that a member on behalf of Executive Council will be willing to rise and respond to that.

The other question I have about this, again noting that this is, I think, a correct objective – I think this is a good objective – is just the question of the sort of details, because there are sort of two things working. One is labour mobility, which is an important goal, and the other is ensuring that regulated professions are regulated by their regulators and not by the government. The application requirements: like, the process itself is inflexible. It has very short timelines, which, again, may be fine. I'm hoping – and my colleagues are, as I understand, reaching out as we speak to regulators themselves who are listed in schedule 1 to see what their take on this is because, you know, in some cases there are already agreements between those regulators. Again, I'm most familiar with the Law Society, so that's kind of where most of my understanding stems from, and they have sort of pretty good processes for moving these things back and forth. I'm not sure whether all professions have that. This is a fairly long list.

I'd also like to know sort of when it is that we are anticipating the regulations because, you know, there are some fairly important details, shall we say, left to the regulation. For instance, they can include exclusions. That's probably not the best way to frame that. The regulations can allow for exclusions. They can allow for people to essentially get around what the act is currently doing. It will be important to see those to understand how the act itself functions.

In addition, I would be interested to know whether the government has done sort of cost estimates in terms of how this will impact these regulators. This is imposing a bunch of additional paperwork essentially on regulators, right? Some regulators who are already doing a good job of this will now have the sort of additional burden of meeting a bunch of additional requirements that require sort of taking what they're already doing and documenting it in different ways in order to prove it to different people.

Again, it's fine. I don't have the sort of reflective, reflexive hatred of all things regulation the way those across the aisle normally do, but when you are imposing a requirement on someone, you should consider kind of what the upsides and downsides of that are. I would be interested to know sort of what the cost estimates are in terms of how much this is going to impose on those bodies, because they're also required to keep a bunch of information for a really long time and submit to audits and produce documents on demand. It does seem like a lot of sort of additional regulatory requirements, what the members opposite would call red tape, being imposed here.

I also find it interesting – now I'm looking at section 12 here, and it refers to the minister. In this case the minister is defined under the government regulation act, which will be sort of set out by cabinet. Essentially, cabinet picks who the minister is for any given act, and that can move around. I assume it will be the minister of labour, though maybe the minister of intergovernmental affairs in this case. I would be interested to know how that's going to work in the context of each profession because in this case the minister is in a position to

review registration assessment practices, make recommendations, but also to audit. The minister can conduct a review of specific cases. It says that the minister shall not be involved in a regulation decision, “but the Minister may review a registration decision or an internal review [application].” This interests me only because – again, the context I’m familiar with is the Law Society – even as the Minister of Justice at the time I was still someone who was regulated by the Law Society. They still had the ability to regulate my conduct, and I think that that is appropriate.

The question then sort of becomes – like, this is the minister delving quite far down into the internal sort of regulatory mechanisms of any body. If the ministers involved are themselves regulated – I don’t know – it doesn’t initially feel like the best process to me. Again, I will await hearing, and of course we are still sort of waiting to hear back because this bill, having been introduced yesterday – the professions themselves who are regulated by this need some time to review it and to develop a response and to take a position.

4:40

This is one of the reasons, when we’re in this House, we sort of talk about – you know, the government loves to talk about: oh, there have been all these hours of debate on X, Y, or Z. Well, it’s not really about hours of debate because what we’re doing in this place isn’t about us, or it ought not to be about us. It ought to be about the people of this province, the people who are affected by the legislation, because this legislation is designed to benefit those people. Now, again, the aim of this legislation seems intended to do that. The question is, where the sort of rubber meets the road, if you will: does it actually have that impact? When I’m looking at this particular legislation, those are some of the questions that come to mind, and the reason, as I was saying, that sort of we talk about how long a bill has been before the House as opposed to talking about how many hours of debate it’s had is because that’s where the important information is.

Really, what should happen with legislation is that it should be ready to be introduced. There should be technical briefings for the opposition with the opportunity for questions. There should be technical briefings for the media with the opportunity for questions. Then ideally a bill will be before the Legislature for a while because there are entities and people and all sorts that are impacted by things, and the impact that legislation has on people is what’s in the legislation. It’s not what the government says about the legislation, and with this government in particular we’ve seen that on a number of occasions. The impact on people is the actual legislation, so if what the government is saying about the legislation is inaccurate – again, I’m not saying that it’s the case in this bill, but it certainly has been the case with a number of previous bills and this particular government. People deserve the time to be able to go through it, to be able to take it to counsel if they want to take it to counsel, to be able to determine what the impact is and then to be able to raise those concerns.

In this case we’re sort of still in the awkward position of awaiting a response from those organizations on whether they think this will be helpful, whether they think this will be a hindrance, that sort of thing. Certainly, there is nothing inherently wrong with this, the sort of increase in mobility. Certainly, the government is talking about unilateral action here, and that’s fine. I think that in this case it is my sort of general understanding that potentially that vests some economic benefit on its own.

The concern I would have – who doesn’t like beer? Let’s talk about that, because that’s an area in which we sort of delved when we were in government. It was the case that every province in the country had protectionist legislation around its craft beer, essentially, except

Alberta. Alberta was the only province that didn’t have that situation. Basically, what we got is the sort of expansion of craft brew industries in every other province except Alberta, and that was problematic. Now, when we were in government, we took steps to step in and to change that, and we have seen the blossoming of the industry as a result of that.

Yes, I think this is likely to have a beneficial effect. I think I’m likely to be supportive of this legislation. The reason I can’t speak at this moment with total clarity is because we are still waiting to hear back from a number of important people who will be impacted by this. We are still waiting to hear back, you know, in terms of the economic impact. I hope what we hear is positive. I really do. It would actually be nice.

The public especially – people have started watching, I think, more recently what’s going on with the government, probably because there have been more reasons to object to the government: the situation with the parks, the situation with coal mining in the Rockies, the vast mishandling of COVID. There have been a lot of reasons for people who are not normally super engaged to become more engaged. For those individuals they may think that this sort of level of animosity is typical, but it isn’t. This level of animosity: I mean, it springs from a government that is sort of the least transparent in history, so that creates a lot of friction.

Normally, you know, when you go into a session, you have the situation where an opposition is going to object to a couple of bills and mostly everything else will be fine. I look forward with excitement to being able to say that this bill is great and we’re really happy with it, but until such time as we hear back, we’re not quite in that position yet. But it would be nice to have a moment of getting along, I guess, with the government. It would be nice to see that in here, but I will await those conversations in terms of those regulatory bodies.

I think, again, that with the two competing goals of ensuring labour mobility but also ensuring that we have the proper registration so that Albertans can continue to rely on regulated professions in the way that they normally have, again the big question that I have – and I’ll repeat it in the hopes that someone from Executive Council will answer it – is how the trades are impacted, because they’re not actually listed in schedule 1. In light of the way the act works, affecting also a series of ministers, I’m wondering if maybe that is the route in. That would provide a lot of assurance to my colleagues and I that this is in fact doing what is necessary to address the sort of skills shortages that we’re actually seeing in the province right now.

Yeah. I think, other than that, the second question would be what consultation was done with these folks and what the responses were. I mean, obviously, this bill, the government is saying, has sort of been kicking around within government for a number of months, maybe even a year, so in that time I would assume that they had the opportunity to perform a robust consultation with all of these different folks. Hopefully, if that did occur, if the government did do that robust consultation, then those people should have their positions developed already and be able to communicate them back to us quickly.

Some of the difficulty, I would say, that we have had in terms of being able to fulfill our general function in this place of holding the government to account has been because the government has not done those robust consultations. The result of that is that stakeholders are ill prepared to respond to a bill, so they don’t know what their position is, good or bad. I kind of wonder what that is, because in a lot of cases the position has wound up being positive, so had the government simply taken the time to do that consultation, the whole process could have been streamlined. In any event they,

I suppose, will run their processes as they choose to run their processes.

At the end of the day I think – I mean, my reading of this bill suggests that the aim will have kind of a positive impact. The questions for me just remain around the details and the implementation and whether that positive impact is being had without generating other sort of negative collateral impacts that, you know, folks wouldn't be interested in.

I guess the last thing I would say on this point is that many of these listed entities or sort of what are called self-governing professions – and that's important. I think self-governing professions are incredibly important. I actually think there are a number of folks out there, a number of different people who want to become self-governing professions, and the reason they want to do that is because for someone who's good, who's respected in their profession, it's much easier to compete on the open market with your skills if you know that everyone is being held to a minimum standard, right? You know, as a lawyer I have to perform work to a certain standard. It's important that the public be able to rely on the Law Society to regulate all lawyers, all doctors, all engineers because that work does need to be performed to that standard. Imagine if our electricians were not regulated the things that could go wrong or if our welders were not regulated. That would be a huge concern.

4:50

The reason it's so important to have those professions is because it allows each individual who is regulated to sort of compete fairly. If you don't have a self-regulated profession, you potentially have some people who are doing the work much, much better and charging commensurate with the well-done work they are performing – okay; I will wind up – and some who are performing more poorly. The importance of those professions is to ensure that everyone has the same standards, so everyone has the same opportunity to compete. It essentially creates a level playing field. Obviously, it would be important not to intervene in that. I therefore look forward to hearing back from both the government and those regulated professions on their view about whether or not that is what is occurring here.

With that, I will say thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(1) will be available in subsequent speeches. I see the Premier rising. I'm not sure if he's rising to provide a comment or . . .

Mr. Kenney: About 29.

The Speaker: Perfect. Just for the context of the House, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is no longer available. Only through a matter of interventions, which will be subsequently allowed on this speech that will be coming up if there's a member who would like to join in the debate – I did earlier see the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland catch my eye. I'm not sure if there are others.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back. You know, it's good to be talking about something that's exciting and something that's hopeful and something that's thoughtful, that actually pulls together a bigger plan. A little while ago I was harassing the Premier and several other cabinet ministers about economic corridors and how we could look at gathering and garnering a bunch of corridors, looking at industries, knitting together the province, and I was fortunate enough to be granted the opportunity to lead an economic corridor task force. And this? This falls within it.

With the work that we've been doing with this economic corridor task force, we've got a ton of people from across the province, kind of north, central, and south. We've been reaching out across the different provinces, talking to different industries, and a lot of the issues and the challenges that come up are labour. When the rubber hits the road, where do we get the labour from? You know, the Premier mentioned so eloquently some of these other projects that are coming up on the radar. It's going to be phenomenal, but we have to get ready for the wave. We have to be able to recognize and acknowledge that we have a labour deficit in a lot of these areas.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Former life on projects: I was blessed to be able to work in just about all the provinces in the country that we have, you know, up in the Yukon, consulting up there in Whitehorse. I worked on projects out in British Columbia, both in fibre optics and in pipe out there in energy projects, in the province here, obviously, with the energy sector. Whoever hasn't been to Fort McMurray hasn't ever lived in Alberta. It's kind of like one of those things. For the record it's often said that Fort McMurray is the second largest city in Newfoundland, and it's not without good reason. We bring in a lot of folks from across this province. Coincidentally, when I was consulting back in the Newfoundland side of the equation, there were subdivisions and towns out there outside of St. John's. They refer to them as Little Alberta.

We have connections right across this country. In Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec: the same type of thing. When you're on these big, major projects, that I was so blessed to be part of – and I'll give you an example of sitting in the Northwest Territories building a diamond mine, which was the Ekati diamond mine, one of my first industrial projects. I was a project co-ordinator from Alberta that managed a structural steel team. One was from British Columbia, another one was from Ontario, another one from Quebec. Here's what happens when you bring Canadians together from across provinces, across this beautiful country of ours and get them together working on one of these projects: you break down all of those artificial barriers that get built up over time. You manage to work on something that's of relevant importance to everybody else. You learn about the fabric and the tapestry of our country.

For us as Albertans to bring something forward like this, like Bill 49, that allows the mobility, recognizes that those other jurisdictions are just as competent if not more competent than ourselves: this is good. You would think this would already have happened. We've got freer trade in a lot of examples where I can go north and south rather than east and west, I can literally, in a lot of circumstances, trade labour mobility across the border than I can within my own provinces and boundaries. What this is going to do for some of these major capital projects is that it's going to give us that continuity, that access.

You know, the other thing that happens time and time again is when folks get out here – I refer to my constituency as God's country, and I say that to get people talking about the province and thinking about it. That's how I feel about the entire province. When they get a flavour of what we have out here to offer, oftentimes what happens is that they pick up the phone and they move the kids and the families, and everybody else comes out here to follow with it.

Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act, makes it easier and faster for skilled professionals and trade workers – it's not just the trades; it's those other skills that we have as well, so on the medical side of the equation or other credentials like that. Alberta has always been an attractive place. You know, I've talked about that. People come out here because it is. We say it tongue in cheek: it's the land of opportunity, the Alberta advantage. That's our biggest advantage;

it's our fabric of who we're made of. The new Albertans that come in from the rest of the provinces: we'll welcome you with open arms.

This bill is keeping with the mind of reducing red tape. Again, talking about those artificial trade barriers set up between provinces: this meets that narrative in full. The fact that we might be an outlier at this point: I'm thinking that's not being on the bleeding edge; it's simply being on the leading edge. Hopefully, that will be reciprocated across the other provinces as well. We can lead by example on this.

You know, we've got a bunch of things that have been happening over the summer here because of the job-creation tax cut. We've been talking about that. That puts us on par. We're not necessarily on the leading edge of that yet, but we are darn close when you look at the North American footprint.

When we were talking about presidential elections – the other side had brought that up a little bit. Actually, a bit of a windfall was seen. What that administration is doing and how the taxes are increasing down there is actually making a competitive advantage lean more in our favour. So even though they're our largest trading partner – and Texas is that – we're actually being able to compete. And with Dow coming up here and showing that, it's kind of a really big deal.

When we're looking at some of the infrastructure that's required to move products, through the economic corridor task force, rail comes up lots: how do we reach these ports? That's going to be of major importance as well. When we look at the junior rail companies, the short-line rail companies, Saskatchewan did a lot better job than we did in Alberta, so they have a workforce that's kind of sitting there in the wings. When we start looking at really opening up Prince Rupert or you look at some of the other ports of interest, we need to build that farm team. So you're either going to try to grow these and develop these folks from this area locally, or you're going to bring them from across the provinces. With those different types of industries the sky is the limit. You know, we had over about 20,000 new jobs in the last, the third consecutive month. I mean, that's significant growth.

There's also the film and television tax credit, which is actually really good to see. I'm happy to see this. There was a little film that was brought up. My kids actually brought it to my attention. It was *The Last of Us*. [interjections] I know. It's kind of a funny thing. I'm dating myself, but Pac-Man was a big deal when I was a kid. You know, it's one of those things, yeah, Galaga and Space Invaders. Then you kind of got into these first-person shooter games and all of those things. But understanding how big that gaming industry really is: it eclipses television and movies. The fact that we now can garner these types of productions to come up here: my kids were stoked, literally, to see *The Last of Us*, a game that they've been following, that franchise, being made into a movie. This isn't by chance. Thanks to the minister of jobs and economy for really working hard on that and everyone here for helping to facilitate some of the legislation that managed to bring these things forward. Thank you for that.

Red tape reduction: boy, oh boy, we've got a long way to go. We've done some really great work, but we're not done yet.

The ability to take a look at this, the succinct approach: it's not just a one-and-done type solution. When you look at how our team has been working – some of the MLAs have been working on these little task forces – you've got the different committees working together. You have the ministers pulling this and actually leaning on the bench. You know, we hear it lots, that we're just backbenchers, we don't really do much. Well, maybe that's how different governments operated in the past. That's not how it works over here. When we're all pulling our weight and we're offering what we have for different skill sets and bringing that to the table,

these are the innovations that are coming forward. Again, it's succinct. It's an overall strategy and an overall plan to help grow our economy and grow our province.

This fits so eloquently into that. You know, I think back to the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corp. When we were just new candidates, that one got me excited, being from linear projects before and seeing how that would be a game changer. In my opinion, this is very similar in that context. We can get access to decent labour. We can make sure that those skill sets are recognized in all facets and all industries, both professionals and trades, and that's really going to bolster the home team.

There's always some concern of protectionism. You know, you hear the battle back and forth between which licence plates should be allowed in which province at which time or which artificial tax will be brought up. That has never been successful in building anything. Again, I'll lean back on those projects that I worked on before. When you lean on the depth of this country, on what it has to offer, the different regional strengths and some of the skills that you bring, that's when you light it up. That's when you can set yourself apart on the world stage. That's when you become 'Canadians' again rather than of 'Can't-nadians'.

If you look at this, all those flags up there, that's who we are. Now, we're the prettiest, the best province in the country, I'll say, but those other ones come in a close second, depending on which room you're talking to at which time. That project up in the Territories: we never would have been able to pull that off without leaning on the Quebec ironworkers, without leaning on, you know, the guys from B.C. and across the country, without leaning on the logistics folks, without leaning on all of those Canadians to pull that thing off in the middle of the most remote region, arguably, that I've ever been on; 350 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife, out in the middle of the tundra, and you have this thing flourishing and popping up.

5:00

You know, when I look at the LNG sector, as an example, the Russians have got us beat. While we were dragging our feet as a country, trying to shut down our energy sector, protesting pipelines and all the other sort, and all this other rhetoric that takes place, the Russians didn't flinch. In 2009 they started working on Yamal. In 2017 this thing is running at 110 per cent overcapacity. They're looking at three more trains that are going in place. They have 17 icebreakers that are up there. They're all taking advantage of two things, their proximity on the globe – well, it's actually three things. We'll go with the other one: their proximity on the globe, because when you turn the globe on its head, you're standing at the North Pole. That gives you access to Asia. It gets you access to Europe, the quickest route.

They took an opportunity. They funded some gas that they have. The amount of investment that was thrown in there from not only the Russians but the Chinese, the Japanese – the rest of the European Union was throwing cash in there. ConocoPhillips was lining up. Shell was in there. Petro-Canada, ironically, was going to throw some cash in the bucket. That is an interesting thing when you've got a Canadian company going to invest in Russia because we can't get our act together back home.

Now, the Russians have figured this out. They're tied into Europe. I'm not sure if anyone heard, but the lights didn't just go out in Georgia. The lights are going out in Europe. They're not getting enough energy. Guess what. Good, clean Canadian energy can be brought to the forefront if we put things like this in place, if we take the lead, if we start working together.

Now, Churchill gets really interesting. The Minister of Finance had asked me: is Churchill viable? Well, yeah, 20 years ago, maybe

not. But we've had this other thing, this global climate change. It's actually the first time in 10,000 years that the Northwest Passage might be open. Right now with talking to the Coast Guard, with Stephan King, not to be mistaken with Stephen King – one tells a good horror story; the other one tells great things about the Arctic and how to move boats and ships up in that region. When I pick up the phone and call Stephan, he's telling me about three ports of interest that really make a lot of sense: Churchill is one of them, Grise bay is another one, and then also Tuk.

When we start connecting these dots together, can we viably do this? Yes. It's seasonal ice now. It's not 40 or 50 years ago. You have to look at the drift in those ports and those corridors. When you start looking at the global fleet, it's already being built up for Arctic-type conditions, and when you have Russia and China both taking a very lion's share of that portage or that crossing, when China says that they're an Arctic nation, it's not because they just want to take a look at the polar bears up in Churchill and kind of move on through. This is where we're changing.

This type of initiative: this is where we tie things together. This is where we take our presence on the global stage. This is where we get behind each other as a country. This is where we give the world the clean energy that it needs. We can be major players in this.

As you can tell, Premier, I'm really stoked about this one – the rest of my colleagues as well – because this is the way the government should work. This is the way this Legislative Assembly should work. The opposition: you're onboard with this, too. I know you want to explore it a little bit more, but this is really opening the conduit to a bunch of those things that we can really become.

As far as, you know, the other transferable skill sets on this one, aerospace and defence – I'm not sure if you guys have heard of this, the Alberta International Air Show. We managed to get it off the ground this year. About 40,000 Edmontonians came out. [interjection] You're welcome. That was in God's country. We got that one going. On the field from there we've got this little company called Pegasus Imagery. They are two former – the Canadian Airborne Regiment is where they were from. They literally are building up this little miniature tech hub right in that area, and they're able to tap into the U of A because they have the artificial intelligence group. I know the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and I have sparred back and forth on that, but I honestly – he and I can talk. I think he's the most capitalist member of that caucus over there, so we can get along on a few things. That was one of them.

They're developing this little tech industry right over there. They're also tying into defence. They've signed contracts with Boeing and General Dynamics. One of the reasons for this is that we're sitting right on that major superpower at the back door. We've got access to a skilled workforce, and we're the closest thing to that Arctic strategy. These types of things are well within our wheelhouse, and when you look at those transferable skill sets to the aerospace and defence industries, 80 per cent of them can come from the energy sector because of the high proficiency, the quality that we have in the education. When we only have to convert 20 per cent of the skill sets to bring them back over to another industry that is massive and booming, we definitely have an advantage, and this will go a long ways towards that.

I could go on for hours. I don't want to take up and burn up the shot clock. As you can tell, I'm fully caffeinated and excited about the Alberta advantage. I'm fully caffeinated and excited about what we are doing here, very proud to be back with my colleagues, very glad to be talking about something other – other – than that doom and gloom that's out there because a guy cannot catch a break or a lady cannot catch a break from all the headwinds we've been facing.

I'll give you an example. Talking about air shows, we were out there in a little investment of about \$2.15 million into the Villeneuve Airport by putting in a little waterline. That's going to facilitate this facility to grow. I was literally standing with Mayor Hnatiw. Hats off to her and the Villeneuve landing network for pulling together a bunch of like-minded people, really taking a run at aerospace and defence. Edmonton International Airport's Steve was there. He made his announcement, and both of them thanked me as the MLA for the area to help pull this across the line and to get some funding in there. Now we're going to see this industry start taking off because they're building hangar space. They couldn't get enough hangars out there because they didn't have access to water.

I'm literally on top of this stage – and I'm sure this has happened to the Premier and lots and lots of my colleagues as well. I'm up there. CTV News is asking me a bunch of questions, and I'm knocking it out of the ballpark. Like, I hadn't been out in front of people in a while. It was feeling kind of like it is today, where you actually get to look at real live people rather than, you know, that screen that we've been dealing with. We talked about aerospace, we talked about the facility, and we talked about the air show and how it was all going to be coming together and things were starting to coalesce. Ten minutes of questions and the next day in the CTV report: the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland wasn't even there.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Getson: That's right.

But I'll tell you what. We're here now, and this Bill 49 is going to get us rolling again.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has risen.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't quite understand what you were saying. I used to be able to read lips so well, you know, and my hearing isn't that great, so I'm looking forward to the day where we can see people's lips moving and I can employ that skill again.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak briefly on Bill 49 in second reading. I've just seen it here today. Actually, I believe it was introduced yesterday, so I'm speaking just on first thoughts in regard to Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act. I mean, certainly, on first blush – right? – it seems like it's promising. It's an ability for people to move to the province of Alberta with the skills that they have acquired through experience and through education in other provinces and territories, I presume, as well in Canada and to be able to employ those same skills here in the province.

You know, on first blush, I mean, this seems like a logical and reasonable thing to move on. There are some questions, though, in regard to how this might be executed and how it can be positively received by the general public and by the professional associations that are affected and by the workers that would presumably use this new opportunity for their own lives. Of course, when we do build legislation, we're doing so to help facilitate something on the ground, right? It can be an idea. It can be a good idea or a well-meant concept, but if it doesn't work on the ground, then it doesn't work; it's just a moot point.

Some of the things that I was just thinking about – certainly, you know, we'll have time to flesh these things out and get some answers, I hope. I guess the first thing that came to my mind was that not so long ago this same UCP government also spoke about credentials and people moving to Alberta being able to use their

credentials, and this was in regard to international credentials, for someone to be able to pursue the profession in which they trained from another country. Since we've already gone down this path – it's not a dissimilar path, Mr. Speaker; the Labour Mobility Act within Canada, the Labour Mobility Act and credentials from international sources as well – I would just like to maybe open the door and review: how successful was that initiative from this government so far? How's it working out so far?

5:10

I'm curious to know because what I've seen just from anecdotal experience from my own constituency, my own constituents is that they haven't seen much progress on this at all. I mean, everybody has those stories about doctors that are driving cabs and so forth, right? What I'm seeing is that people are saying, "Well, I am an engineer; I come from the University of Cape Town," or wherever it is, "and I'm still not getting any progress in regard to recognition," or "I'm having to spend a tremendous amount of money in order to get that credential moved through."

Since we're moving down something that's not a dissimilar path here with this bill, I'd like to know: how's that other initiative going? Can we learn from that, and can we help to make this bill better and to make the situation for the recognition of international credentials better, too? It is an important thing. To be working is a fine thing – it's an important thing – but to be working in your profession is even better. It's better for our economy, it's better psychologically, and it's better for the economic circumstances of those people who are affected. So that's my first question, right? I think it relates directly to Bill 49, which, you know, has some merit, I think, categorically.

The second question that I have – again, this is coming from understanding the demographics of our province. We have a young province, and we have a high level of postsecondary education as well. However, those educated professionals are bringing their degrees with them from other jurisdictions, right? We, in fact, have a low participation rate for our own domestic population in postsecondary, including trades and polytechnics and college degrees and university, all of those things, an interesting dichotomy where we have a high level of postsecondary degrees in our province and a low participation rate in achieving and getting those degrees here in the province of Alberta as well.

It's a problem. I want to make sure that we're not exacerbating that problem by just continuing on the same pattern that we always have, which is to bring educated professionals in from other jurisdictions and to leave our own domestic young population without that initiative to push forward to have affordable postsecondary education, to have postsecondary education available in all corners of our province, and to make sure that we have the relevant programming that we need to have for young people, that they want to study, and the programming to provide professionals and trades in the areas that our economy needs to prosper as well. I don't want something like this to interfere with another issue that we definitely need to deal with, which is to provide a higher level of postsecondary participation for our own domestic young population, to invest in affordable positions, to invest in the programs that people want to study and that we need for our economy, too.

I just want to put that out there. You know, again, I would be the first to welcome our ability to attract people from all across the country to work here and to build their families and to help prosper. It's a very, very fundamental economic ambition to pursue. I just want to make sure that we're building something for our young people, too.

Another issue that I am concerned about is in regard to professional associations. My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View mentioned this and pointed it out as well. You know, when I was looking through the very last page – I often read bills from the last page to the first page – it talks about all of the professions that are affected. I wanted just to ask a question about this list. I think it looks like 40-some in here, but in the press releases around Bill 49 they mentioned that there are at least 100 professions that are affected by this bill. I was just curious when I started looking through this list: is this the whole thing, or are there other trades that are somehow affected, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View pointed out, through other ministries, perhaps through Labour or through Health or something like that? I don't know. Is the list exhaustive?

The second question is: did the government properly canvass with this bill with all of these entities? I know this bill has been kicking around for a year and a half, two years, so I certainly hope that the government talked to all of these trades and professional associations and ironed out the details that they needed to help facilitate this bill coming to fruition and into action because any sort of lack of doing so does a disservice to all of these groups that otherwise live and function day to day in certification, and they have lots of probably good tips on how to make the system better, right? I'm just curious to know: is this list exhaustive, and has this list been properly canvassed in regard to the implications of Bill 49 to their professional association?

Another question that I have, you know – and, again, it's to make sure that we are maintaining the integrity of each of these professional organizations, right? Each of the professional organizations sets a standard for practice for whatever it is they're doing, from funeral homes here to child daycare to occupational therapists to pharmacies, you name it. That forms the essence of what a standard should be for those professions. We want to strengthen the integrity of that, not weaken it by any means at all. As the Premier mentioned, you want to go to a place and know that if you go to a dentist, that dentist has that level of training that will ensure your safety and to provide good service.

You know, we need to make sure that Bill 49 does in no way compromise the integrity of the professionalism, of the standards that these groups provide for us. How would that happen, Mr. Speaker? Well, you know, if you have a rule that you compel someone within 20 working days or 40 days, whatever it is, to move a file to ensure that someone has passed or failed in regard to their professional standard, meeting the standard that we have here in Alberta, I just want to make sure that that's not rushing things, number one.

Number two, which is, I think, even more of a possibility, is that if they say, "Well, we can't do that," then is it going to lead to higher rejection rates by that process, where they'll say, "Okay; we can't process all of these nursing aide applications right now, so we'll just not pass them at all"? That can lead to other problems and chaos and uncertainty, and we don't want that. Again, maintaining the integrity of professional associations and maintaining their professional ability to evaluate the standards, the skills that each individual has, and not creating a situation where people are being rejected out of hand because professional associations are passively aggressively just not participating somehow, rejecting – stamp, stamp, stamp – all the time.

Another area that I just wanted to touch on briefly is around cost. Professional associations maintain themselves through fees, and the fees are paid by the members. For a lot of professional associations that I know, the ones that are represented in my family, the fees are not cheap, right? You're paying hundreds of dollars every single year, you know, to retain your professional nursing licence or your

LPN licence or your teacher's certificate and so forth. I just don't want to create a bill that unnecessarily increases the fees that people have to pay every year to belong to that service because the professional association has had a serious monetary hit from Bill 49. I don't think any of us want that, and I think we have to have a price that's associated with Bill 49 to help to evaluate whether we should support this bill or not.

Like I say, in principle it seems like a good idea, right? It seems sensible, but there are a number of areas, that I just pointed out, that deserve consideration as well. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to someone else, and I hope that we can all consider this bill in the constructively critical way that I just laid out.

Thank you.

5:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has risen.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 49, Labour Mobility Act. As some of my colleagues have pointed out, I'm in a similar position in that there are elements of this bill that I'm supportive of. I do have some questions as we're only in second reading at the moment. You know, I recognize the fact that a lot of employers are facing a talent shortage. I think that's been acutely felt in the tourism sector but I know first-hand – I should say second-hand because I'm not an employer – in the technology space as well. Companies are really struggling to hire the right people with the right skills. Now, I don't think that this necessarily applies to tech-focused companies, but of course there aren't certifications that need to be met, so that would be a little bit of a moot point.

You know, for me, Mr. Speaker, I think that if we looked at this bill in isolation of other policies the government has brought forward, funding or lack thereof or cuts to funding, yes, on the surface opening up Alberta in a way that makes it easier for people to get credentialed is a positive thing. I know from talking to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, who was our military liaison, that she's met with families across this country who have talked about the challenge for their spouses to be credentialed when they move across the country. I think that is a significant barrier. Absolutely.

For me, the question that I have – and I raised this concern when the government, over a year ago now, looked at reducing Alberta's trade exemptions significantly, opening up the province, which I'm not opposed to. But what I want to see is reciprocation. The issue that I had – and I did have the privilege of being the one to renegotiate the Canadian free trade agreement on behalf of the government of Alberta. In fact, CFIB even gave me a pair of golden scissors, which would probably shock the associate minister of red tape and others on the other side. But we did.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that one of the biggest challenges that we have in our system is that there's been an unwillingness of other provinces to reduce their trade exemptions. Now, members of the government have said, "Well, you introduced a number; the number of exemptions were higher in Alberta than some of the other provinces," and that's true. But you need to look at why. It's because we had exemptions that were very, very specific, where provinces like Ontario cut out the whole energy sector, all of it, that is exempt from other provinces being able to bid on contracts. For me, what we've done – and I ask, you know, the Premier and challenge the government to produce outcomes. Let's look at tangible results of those changes reducing Alberta's trade barriers. How has that benefited Alberta companies?

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that the economy of Alberta is larger than B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba combined. Our economy is larger than those three other provinces, but at the moment those other provinces benefit more – their companies have greater access to government procurement contracts and can bid and compete – than what Alberta companies have going into their economies. Alberta companies have more barriers to face, and companies of those provinces receive more benefits than from the government of Alberta.

I see that my colleague has risen, and I will give way.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for giving way. The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview was just commenting on the Canada free trade agreement as well as the New West Partnership trade agreement, something that, obviously, when he was a minister, he did work on. Something that relates to this bill specifically is actually the notification that's required under those two pieces of trade agreements to ensure that if there are changes in the scope of practice – any type of mobility changes, legislative changes, membership categories – scopes of practice are all notified back to the membership holders of those trade agreements.

I guess my question would be – well, one to the government would be to ensure that that's been done and that the process has been completed and that we're not just saying that now by introducing a piece of legislation, that notification has been provided. In addition to that, maybe the member would be able to clarify: what kind of consequences might there be if that notification is not done in relation to our trade agreements?

Mr. Bilous: Well, I will thank my colleague for that question. Yeah. Forcing me to recall, you know, a few years ago. There are a number of processes that provinces can go through if they feel that another province is non trade compliant. I do recall the bout that I engaged in with the former Premier of Saskatchewan over licence plate gate, for those that may recall that, where they accused Alberta of refusing contractors and tradespeople with Saskatchewan plates coming on to Alberta work sites. Of course, it was completely unfounded. There was not one example, and that was eventually dropped.

But, I mean, there is a process, so the question is still valid as far as: have the other members of the New West Partnership been informed of these changes as well as the rest of the country under the Canada free trade agreement?

For me, again, these moves to make Alberta more accessible to companies – we'll talk about first-hand – need to be reciprocated. Otherwise, we are giving unfair access to companies in other jurisdictions. That puts Alberta at a disadvantage. I'd like to see that Alberta companies have a fair playing field. If we're going to open up our own borders, which I would argue that we need to – and I do recognize. I think it was the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland who spoke about – and this was my frustration as well – that there are more barriers to companies trading with other parts of our own country than there are with companies going over to Europe or Ukraine or some of the other countries that we have free trade agreements with. Is that ridiculous? Yes, it absolutely is.

You know, I'm just not convinced that the decisions that were made a year ago by this government to just open up Alberta without negotiating with other provinces to get them to reciprocate has been a fair deal, and now we've lost our bargaining with them because they have access to our province, right? I mean, I guess time will tell if other provinces do jump on board. But with this bill, again, the fact that we are in a position where there is a deficit of labour – I mean, it is interesting that for the first time in 10 years Alberta is

in a position that we have more out-migration than we do immigration or net migration.

But my point – and this is where we have to look at this bill in the context of what’s going on in the province, okay? I’ve spoken to young graduates from our postsecondaries who are saying that they don’t want to stay in Alberta because of policies that this government is bringing in: significant cuts to our postsecondary system, cuts to our health care system. I appreciate the fact that the government has put in additional money to deal with COVID. Again, there’s a very clear argument that can be made that the fourth wave was, in fact, predictable to everyone except for the government, and much of what we’ve been dealing with over the last couple of months could have been avoided had proper planning been followed.

The point is that at the time of the pandemic this government had picked a fight with doctors and then, subsequently, nurses. Despite the fact that the Premier and others claimed that no physicians were leaving Alberta – I mean, it’s absurd, because anyone just has to look on social media to see the number of physicians in certain communities, especially rural communities, saying that they’re leaving the province. We have example after example of hospitals that had to defer, delay, or cancel surgeries or shut down certain days of the week because they didn’t have enough staff.

5:30

People want to live in jurisdictions that have a high-quality education system, a high-quality health care system, that provide opportunities for families, and this is my point, that this bill can’t be looked at in isolation from other policies this government is bringing forward. Part of why we’re facing certain labour shortages is because people are leaving Alberta because they don’t want to be here. In fact, communications I received from a company that’s trying to attract talent has said that people are saying: my values don’t align with the current government’s values; I don’t want to stay in a province that is making these cuts and making these choices. We are losing talent. We’ve also seen a number of companies that were supposed to move to Alberta but decided not to.

Despite the fact that the Premier talks about the corporate tax cut as the silver bullet, it has not been the silver bullet. I go back to the area of technology and artificial intelligence where the corporate tax rate is not even in a company’s top five of their priorities or top five areas of importance when they’re looking at what jurisdiction to locate to. Access to talent is usually the number one if not the top three. Again, we have these incredible postsecondary institutions, 26 of them across the province, a couple of them that attract students from all over the world. What we hear from the minister is that the reason they’re making massive cuts to these postsecondaries is because we need to get in line with the rest of the country. Well, let me tell you, Minister, that if we want to compete and we want to attract talent, we need to be investing in them. [interjection] I apologize, Member; I will not be accepting an intervention at this point in time.

For me, a bill that talks about making it easier for labour to come and work here with timelines: I support that concept, but it can’t be done in isolation. It won’t be successful without looking at the broader picture. There are a number of things, including not just the talent pipeline, that need to be addressed, but the fact is that we also need to be looking at how other provinces will reciprocate to Alberta to ensure that, again, there’s this level playing field. Part of the reason I’m skeptical is that we’ve yet to see that reciprocation exist with Alberta reducing its trade barriers on interprovincial trade. Will other provinces follow suit? I guess we’ll find out. I mean, the government may have some modelling that the minister or someone from the front bench will be able to provide when we

get into Committee of the Whole. I appreciate that we’ve just started second reading.

I’d like to see some modelling as far as long-term employment forecasts. I mean, I know that one of the things that the federal government and the country can do is look at continuing to attract new immigrants to our country, skilled labour that will fill some of this deficit. I think that more can be done from the federal government looking at supporting the Alberta nominee program and increasing the number of positions that can come into Alberta very, very quickly.

It’s true, Mr. Speaker, that there really is a global talent shortage that is going on right now, and I know that some sectors more than others are being hit. But I also know that how this government has handled COVID in the last 20 months, when we talk about teachers and the teaching profession – I mean, I’m a teacher myself, and many friends and family are also teachers. They’ve been burning out and going on stress leave and sick leave because of how poorly this government has handled COVID-19. You know, if we look at, for teachers and nurses, enrolment numbers in our postsecondary, I’m pretty confident that they’re on the decline and that those that are graduating are saying: we’re moving to another province that is going to treat our profession with dignity and respect and value our professions.

I’ll wrap up my remarks here, Mr. Speaker. Again, at the onset of this bill, the spirit of it: I’m in favour of it. Again, I wish we could look at the larger context of the conversation as far as what attracts people or keeps them here in our great province as a fulsome discussion and not just look at this one bill and what it will do. Again, with that, will it be reciprocated? Will Albertans have that same access?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mrs. Allard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act. I believe this bill is a critical step in ensuring protection and opportunity for workers seeking employment in Alberta, and hopefully, eventually, to the member opposite’s point, other jurisdictions will follow the lead of Alberta on this and it will go both ways. In the interim the Labour Mobility Act is an important step on the road to Alberta’s economic recovery overall.

As the MLA for Grande Prairie I hear almost daily about labour shortages businesses are facing, and it doesn’t seem to matter which sector, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, certainly from my experience as a 28-year business owner in the franchise business, that it’s not necessarily always skilled labour although we have a component of that as well, but one of the key differentiators for franchisees who can be successful in the hospitality industry and those who can’t is the ability to attract and retain labour. You can’t grow without the people that run your businesses, and it’s really important that we look at this issue. I think the member opposite said it really well, that this is going to be a key differentiator going forward for many sectors of our economy.

I believe this act will regulate occupations across the province and ease the transition of skilled labourers to Alberta, and I think there’s no more critical time than now to be doing that, as we look at all the economic indicators and we see where we’re going as a province. We see the exciting growth in GDP. We see the way that we’re leading the country, the way that we’ll continue to lead the country. We want to make sure that we set Alberta up for success longitudinally and we set Alberta up for success in every sector of the economy and we allow people to come here and create ease, roll

out the welcome mat for them. It will assist us in securing critical skilled labour now and in the future. I believe this helps families. I believe this helps communities. It helps to grow communities.

I think back to when I moved to Grande Prairie, in 1997. The population would have been about 30,000, and now we're sitting at over 75,000 residents in Grande Prairie and a trading area of about 400,000. That happened because of entrepreneurs. That happened because of investment. That happened because of the attraction of labour, both skilled and unskilled labour coming to the area and making it their home and making it their community. I believe that businesses – we're back to that rising tide floats all boats.

I want to talk about the new hospital in Grande Prairie for a minute. This is a critical time for us to allow skilled workers to come in from other provinces and to attract them. When I think of that beautiful new facility that I hope and pray opens this year finally, Mr. Speaker, 2021 – we're going to have that facility open to the public. I'm so grateful for that. I'm so grateful for the vision of those that came before us in this Assembly who invested in that infrastructure years ago, unfortunately too many years ago. It's taken too long. Regardless, more critical now than ever is to deliver on that promise. More critical now than ever is to make sure that we open that hospital with skilled labour, with nurses and doctors and anaesthetists and radiologists and specialists. This bill, Bill 49, helps us to do that. I believe this is an important correction as occupations in the province are currently regulated inconsistently and ineffectively. We as a government have said over and over that we want to cut red tape. We want to make things easier and simpler and more logical. We want to move at the speed of business. We're committed to doing that.

5:40

Currently workers face mobility restrictions when they're trying to take up work in Alberta or other provinces, for that matter. For instance, they'll have additional examinations or courses, training requirements, or delays. They'll move to the province and not be able to work, and we need them. The Labour Mobility Act will take steps to introduce uniform legislative requirements for regulatory authorities that govern occupations in Alberta. Features from this legislation introduced in other Canadian jurisdictions will be incorporated and tailored to implement a better and more efficient system overall in our province. These new regulations would include requiring appeals and processes for applicants, implementing timelines for registration decisions, prescribing what types of documents regulatory authorities can request. I think that lends itself to some consistency, some predictability for workers.

I've dealt with workers many times. In my case, most of the workers were coming from overseas versus coming from another province in Canada, but I've dealt with both. I've seen first-hand the frustration, the discouragement that families have experienced when they try to come in and they want to work, right? They want to work, they want to build their dream, they want to participate in the Alberta advantage, and they can't because they're held up by a piece of paper. One piece of paper expired; then you need this other piece of paper, and you're waiting for that. It's just so frustrating for them, and it doesn't help anything in the community, it doesn't help the family, and it certainly doesn't help the economy.

I believe the Labour Mobility Act will make Alberta a desirable place for workers to take up their occupation. As young people graduate, they'll look to jurisdictions that are open for business, that provide opportunity, that provide jobs, that provide a welcome, that are excited to have them join. No matter where these workers are coming from, Alberta will be saying to all of Canada: we're open for you. Clarifying processes involved with worker mobility will draw additional workers, I believe, to Alberta and serve as a critical

function, ensuring Alberta's economic recovery. We need to fortify Alberta's economy now more than ever. Minimizing barriers for Canadian workers to take up occupation and make a living in this province will not only help ordinary citizens but will inject our economy with new-found strength. With Alberta's economy set to come back stronger than ever, thank goodness, we need to ensure that we have the workers needed to make this happen.

I think back to – gosh, it would have been, I think, late 2018. I was just barely involved in politics. I think I had just been nominated as a candidate and I went to a conference put on by the Manning Centre and I listened to Rex Murphy. If you've never heard Rex Murphy: so worth the time to spend an hour with Rex Murphy. He is a compelling, compelling speaker. But one of the things he talked about that really made me excited to be involved in Alberta politics was the Alberta advantage. From his perspective as somebody from another province, another jurisdiction in Canada, what Alberta had done not only for our citizens but for all of Canada in the opportunities that we afforded – anyone that wanted to come and work, right? He spoke with such passion and such excitement and enthusiasm about what we have done and, I believe, we'll do again for this great country and for this great province.

Encouraging skilled workers to come to Alberta to apply their trade or their skill will have enormous benefits to our economy. I've seen it in the past, right? I saw it in 2007, 2008 when we were booming, and we will be there again. Easing these mobility restrictions and minimizing regulation surrounding worker mobility will create additional jobs and, I think, develop a stronger workforce. I always say to my kids that momentum goes both ways. Creating ease for skilled labour to enter the province creates additional opportunities, and it inevitably will create more investment. It inevitably will create more entrepreneurs. You can't come here and not become an entrepreneur. Combined with the acceleration of the job-creation tax cut and other critical policies of this government, the government's plan to eliminate procurement exemptions under the Canada free trade agreement, I believe Alberta's economy will become one of the most prolific and enticing in North America. I believe we are well on our way and, Mr. Speaker, we are not stopping. As we all know, Alberta has always been a land of opportunity, and even when we face challenges, even then we rise. Just this afternoon I heard our Premier speak about record-breaking new business start-ups in 2020 in the middle of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. That's so remarkable to me, but that's so Alberta. I believe that's the Alberta advantage in action, and it gives me hope to see what the future will look like. It's a bulb getting brighter every day.

This act, Bill 49, will aid in supplying critical human resources to fuel that growth that's already started and, I would argue, will lead to diversification of our workforce and, through it, our economic future. A recent report from the C.D. Howe Institute highlighted that reducing barriers created by an ineffective and inconsistent labour mobility system could provide an estimated additional \$2.8 billion per year to our GDP, and that's at today's levels. Can you imagine, as we grow, how many more billions we'll add to our GDP, how many more families we'll bless? How many more higher advanced education institutions will we support? How many more charitable organizations will benefit from more economic activity right across our province?

Now, some of you may be wondering why we're introducing legislation that supports workers in other provinces given that there are Albertans out of work here. I, too, had that question. We know that this is an important issue for a lot of Albertans, and it remains a top priority for this government. We also know that the most powerful way to attract new jobs is to make Alberta an attractive destination for business investment. By removing barriers to labour mobility, we are attracting investment that will, in its turn, create

jobs for Albertans and stimulate our economy overall. I think of other retooling that we're doing with jobs now grants, for example, and other ways that we're looking at getting creative to help people pivot in their career and join the workforce where they're needed.

Another important consideration for this piece of legislation is that it's not expected to affect taxpayers here in any way. We're facilitating access to Alberta's job market for both Albertans and those wishing to become Albertans, with no foreseeable cost to the average Albertan taxpayer. Given that this legislation will affect more than 100 regulated occupations in Alberta, the Labour Mobility Act will play an important role overall in Alberta's recovery plan, and I believe it will be a template for other provinces as they look at ways that they can recover as well.

Another benefit of the act coming into effect is that it will significantly reduce red tape and costs to Alberta's regulatory authorities, and I would argue that in theory it will reduce red tape and costs to employers, those that are trying to set up shop here or expand, as they bring workers in from other jurisdictions. I know first-hand the pain that that can be, trying to get workers ticketed and ready to go. So I'm very hopeful about that as well.

Given that regulatory bodies will be affected by these changes, the decision to clarify inconsistencies and ineffectiveness in regulatory practices was based off feedback that we received during consultation with Alberta's regulatory authorities, so they were involved in the process as well. The feedback prioritized balancing the consumer needs and public protections with easing of regulation, which is exactly what this act will do.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it's time for Alberta to clean up its regulatory policies. I don't think that's any news to anyone that's ever heard from this government, and we're working hard at that. I'm so grateful for the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the work that she carries on on behalf of this government and ultimately on behalf of Albertans. That's who we really serve.

It's time to make this province an even more attractive and easily accessible home for skilled labour. It's also important that we take steps to stimulate Alberta's economy by attracting business investment, and this means creating jobs. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to join debate? I believe I see that the hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has risen.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the closing minutes of this afternoon's debate to speak to Bill 49, Labour Mobility Act. I have appreciated the conversations that we've heard this evening, in particular what we've heard – well, I've appreciated a lot of it – from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview in recalling some of the work that that member did specifically on the tech file and economic development in his time as a minister under the NDP government in 2015 to 2019. I think it's important to recognize – again, in the early stages, like many of my colleagues, I do believe that I would be able to support in principle what we're seeing here in Bill 49.

5:50

But I continue to be concerned, I suppose, or interested to see how this is actually implemented. Again, we're looking at a piece of legislation that is talking about standardizing and streamlining the processes that recognize credentials and training of out-of-province certified workers, and I appreciate that. I think it's an important conversation.

I would reflect on that member talking about the fact that when we've seen these initiatives put forward by this UCP government before, it hasn't necessarily been reciprocated by other jurisdictions across Canada, and that is very concerning, of course. Whenever we are talking about opening ourselves up for people from outside of the province to come in, I think it is an important initiative as we talk about the idea of labour shortages, but it is important that we see other provinces willing to follow suit as well. So I'm very interested to see – we've heard from members of the government that these conversations are taking place and that they're hopeful that it will happen moving forward, but I think it's important that we do have those commitments from other provinces, and it's unfortunate that we haven't received that yet.

When we talk about labour shortages, as we have heard throughout the discussion here today, obviously, streamlining processes for people from outside the province to be able to come here and work is an important part of that, but I think just as important is the idea that when we are looking at labour shortages, we are identifying the causes of that.

While I appreciate what we have before us in Bill 49, we also have to reflect on the other actions of this government. When we talk about the budget that was put forward by this UCP government, we saw massive cuts to postsecondary institutions to the tune of – and this number could have potentially changed with changes to funding. We saw propositions from this government of thousands of full-time job opportunities disappearing because of the \$690 million cut that this government put forward to postsecondary. We saw the massive 7 per cent increase to tuition year over year. I imagine that change is going to continue, and really no commitment from this minister. Quite the opposite from the Advanced Education minister, that this is only going to continue.

So when we talk about bringing families and workers to our province from other jurisdictions, we have to consider everything. We can't pass legislation in silos, as we see far too often. If a worker wants to come here, they have other considerations. Maybe they have family members, whether that be a partner that works in another industry, whether they be a nurse or a teacher, or maybe they have a child that is in a postsecondary institution, yet this government is making it more expensive and, at the end of the day, having fewer opportunities in the classroom for those students.

The same, unfortunately, goes for our K to 12 system, Mr. Speaker. Cuts just across the board in general. We've seen thousands of teachers left behind even through this pandemic, when supports in the classrooms are needed more than ever. So, again, if we're talking about ensuring that workers feel supported, that they want to come to Alberta and work, when we're reflecting on the opportunities for their child in the K to 12 system, potentially a child with a disability, yet we've seen this government make massive cuts across the board in the K to 12 system. Especially when we look and reflect on the changes that this government has made to early learning opportunities and supports for those with disabilities, we've seen massive cuts to the tune of 76 per cent here in Edmonton when we talk about prekindergarten supports.

It's deeply frustrating that on one hand we can talk about mobility and ensuring that we are doing our best to support employers in reducing that labour shortage, but on the other hand we can be, or this government can be, so blind to the other decisions that they're making that are leading in many cases to these labour shortages in the first place.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview also raised some important points about the idea that we have to consider all of these things, that the idea that reducing the personal income tax or the corporate income tax is not necessarily even in the top five reasons that a corporation or a company might move from one jurisdiction

to the other. I think that that consideration is very similar for anyone who is considering moving here from another jurisdiction as a worker.

It's interesting to see the list of people who are in here, and we've had some conversations about why we aren't seeing red seal trades included in here. I think that's relatively understandable, looking at the fact that red seal programs are interprovincial programs. They can transfer from one province to another, so this type of legislation doesn't necessarily need to affect them in that case. Of course, in that red seal program it goes above and beyond in terms of regulation, I suppose, because you have to do an extra step of examination to ensure that you are compliant and understand the codes across all provinces.

But when we look at the Labour Mobility Act occupations that are included in this, we see registered nurses. Of course, prepandemic this government committed to laying off tens of thousands of nurses and hasn't really changed that commitment through the pandemic. They continue to work, short-staffed in many cases, overworked, underappreciated by this government, yet we are now saying that we want registered nurses to come from other provinces. Again, I can appreciate that it's very possible that we can see on the horizon a labour shortage for nurses, especially as we make our way through this pandemic, how they've been treated and, again, the burnout that they have had to deal with.

We look further on this list. Again, early childhood educators: another industry that has been attacked by this government and has had the budget cut back, yet we are saying that we expect . . .

Mr. Schow: Make way.

Mr. Carson: . . . other early childhood educators . . .

Mr. Schow: Make way, hon. member.

Mr. Carson: . . . from other jurisdictions to come . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, an individual has indicated that they are looking to have you make way should you so choose.

Mr. Carson: Just for clarification, Mr. Speaker, do I have to acknowledge that somebody has asked for an intervention?

The Acting Speaker: You do not have to.

Mr. Carson: Okay. Thank you for that.

The Acting Speaker: Just for clarity, you should indicate one way or another, though.

Mr. Carson: Okay. That's the clarification I was looking for. Not at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as we go through this list of individual organizations or occupations that have been attacked by this government over the last few years and are expecting them to now come from other jurisdictions, it's really, you know, frustrating that we aren't looking to support the ones that are here already. I can appreciate that on the horizon if there is indeed a need or an understanding that there is going to be a shortage in these occupations, I can appreciate something like Bill 49 coming before the House.

Mr. Speaker, again, I look forward to hearing more of the discussion on this piece of legislation. I hope to hear some answers about specific occupations, where the idea that there are going to be labour shortages across all of these occupations is coming from, who the government has consulted with. Have they consulted with every single one of these individual occupations that we see here or the professional body that represents these occupations? Those are important pieces to this because while, just looking at this list, midwives might feel like they have been consulted fairly and that they support the idea of labour migration from other jurisdictions, the same might not be able to be said for land surveyors or land agents.

That was just hypothetical, of course, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's important to see the what-we-heard document that is often presented by a government when these consultations are taking place. I think that all members deserve to see that as well as releasing the consultations that may have taken place while this legislation was being drafted.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 49. I look forward to the ongoing debate, and with that, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Perfect timing. It is 6 o'clock. Noting the time, we are adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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