



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 27, 2021

Day 119

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP),
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Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
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New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has a statement.

Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we learned the results of the October 18 equalization referendum, and I am proud to announce that 62 per cent of Albertans, a clear majority, voted yes to a fair deal. Now, this might upset members across the aisle given that they are agnostic on equalization, but our government has heard Albertans loud and clear, and we will continue to fight for them. That starts now with condemning Justin Trudeau's troubling appointment of activist Steven Guilbeault as Canada's minister of environment. As a professional Greenpeace activist Mr. Guilbeault spent years trying to destroy our energy industry and jobs. He founded the radical activist group Équiterre, which was actually named in the Allan report for organizing campaigns against our oil sands. He was even arrested for his troubles.

Albertans are frustrated by this appointment, which again shows hostility to our province from Ottawa. Thanks to the Allan report, though, we know for certain that there are organized and well-funded campaigns against our energy sector, and now we are facing a hostile federal minister who is not only just okay with it but has actively participated in those attacks. I have very little faith that Mr. Guilbeault can responsibly manage this file or treat Albertans with respect.

Our government has shown remarkable leadership on the climate change file. Since forming government, we invested in job-creating technologies that will reduce emissions by 120 million tonnes over the next 20 years and even more to come because there are additional investments when they come online.

Now more than ever this Legislature must stand up for our province's world-class ESG-leading energy sector and its workers. From challenging equalization to reducing emissions to continuing the responsible development of our oil sands, Albertans have contributed more than their fair share to Ottawa. We deserve respect. All Albertans deserve respect, and we deserve a fair deal in return.

Thank you.

Health Care in Lethbridge

Ms Phillips: Beyond the incompetent UCP management of the pandemic, beyond the heartache of children's surgeries being cancelled and cancer surgeries delayed, there is another massive health crisis in Lethbridge. Thirty thousand people in the city of Lethbridge do not have a family doctor. The Bigelow Fowler clinic in south Lethbridge is closing. Two labs have closed. The Campbell clinic is one of several that aren't accepting new patients. They don't even have enough GPs to cover their current patient list. It is not just anecdotal; it is borne out by the data. Over the past year Lethbridge has had the biggest loss of doctors among Alberta's major cities.

Now, the UCP have tried to blame this on vacations or claim it's natural turnover as doctors retire. Doctors have always retired or

moved. What's different is that there is no one to replace them. That's a direct result of the UCP war on doctors and front-line health care workers. There is no agreement with doctors after the UCP ripped it up. Wave after wave of COVID-19 along with war after war with health care workers of all kinds has left our health system in shambles. One of the best run AHS zones – the south zone, with low costs, excellent integration between primary care, emergency care, and specialist services – is now barely functioning.

A month ago I was joined at a news conference by constituents Paige and Savanna, who both lost their GPs. Paige has lived in Lethbridge her whole life. Paige and three generations of her family have lost their doctor. Savanna has worked with newcomers for the past 10 years, and for the first time there are no GPs available to take recently arrived immigrants and refugees as patients. People are being sent to the ER for primary care during a pandemic. This is not normal.

More than a month ago I asked the new Health minister to get up to speed and get to work. I asked him to report to our community within 30 days with at least some form of a plan. He has done the square root of zero. We are not being heard in Lethbridge. No one in Lethbridge voted for this health care disaster. In 2023 I expect the voters will underline that message.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Deaths of Woman and Child in Hinton

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with a heavy heart. It is with great sorrow that I wish to bring to the Assembly's attention the passing of Mchale Busch and her young son Noah McConnell. The two were the tragic victims of an assault, a double homicide, in Hinton, Alberta, in September of this year. Mchale and Noah are remembered by their loving husband and father, Cody McConnell, their families, the entire community of Hinton, Bashaw, and Camrose. Their deaths are truly a travesty.

Growing up, Mchale spent most of her time participating in programs across Camrose. Eventually she found her passion in skating and made the Camrose Skating Club her second home. While attending all her grade schooling in Camrose, Mchale met and fell in love with her high school sweetheart, Cody. Six years later they welcomed their beautiful baby boy Noah into this world.

Mchale and Noah were the victims of a known sexual deviant and criminal who had been released some time ago. The offender was recognized by the RCMP as a high-risk offender and likely to act again. The true tragedy of this crime is that it was preventable. A petition is circulating, calling on the government to take appropriate action. The plea asks that residents be informed when a high-risk offender is living within close proximity to residents. Both Mr. McConnell and the community members of Hinton have called on the justice system to address the issue.

I ask that we recognize the tragedy of this event and join in empathy with the families of the victims. The deaths of Mchale and Noah have, unfortunately, brought the operation of our justice system to the forefront of the public's attention. I insist that we do not dismiss this tragedy as a one-time occurrence and work to prevent such atrocities from happening in the future for all communities across our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Edmonton Downtown Core Revitalization

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to serve as the MLA for Edmonton's downtown, a dynamic, growing community

home to award-winning restaurants, fantastic arts venues, trail-blazing businesses, innovative nonprofits, and the Edmonton Oilers. But our downtown is also struggling. COVID hit us hard, emptying our streets and office towers and closing down businesses and arts venues, some for good. Sadly, the repeated decisions of this government to put their politics ahead of public health have made those impacts worse. We need them to step up.

This government's roller coaster of closing and reopening, shifting restrictions hurt our hotels, restaurants, bars, clubs, gyms, theatres, and live music venues. This government's refusal to implement a mandatory vaccine passport program has made it harder for businesses, forcing them to hire more staff and exposing some staff to abuse. Businesses built on customer service shouldn't have to act as law enforcement. They need more than just \$2,000 available sometime in the future to help cover the additional costs. They need supports like those we've called for at albertasfuture.ca. They need to see tailored supports for arts and arts organizations, who bring vibrancy to our city core.

COVID also exposed and intensified the ongoing challenges of residents in our community who lack housing and struggle with substance use. We want everyone to feel safe and to be able to live with dignity, and we know the solutions lie in investments in supportive housing, harm reduction programs like supervised consumption sites and safe supply, and moving beyond the warehouse-style shelter system. We need this government to support that, step up, and match investments from the federal government and city council. Specifically, we need them to commit the \$5.9 million repeatedly requested by Edmonton city council to fund wraparound services and five new supportive housing sites.

Residents and businesses in our downtown want to see their provincial government invest in collaborative solutions to support welcoming streets, a vibrant community, and a strong local economy rooted in compassion, dignity, and safety for all. It's the right thing to do, the smart thing to do, and the surest path to a stronger city and province.

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

Film and Television Industry

Mr. Reid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Edmontonians recently witnessed some strange changes to their downtown area and even right here at the Legislature. The normally bustling downtown streets turned into a postapocalyptic wasteland for the filming of the series *The Last of Us* earlier this month. While this may have been an interesting change for many up here, it's something that the constituents in Livingstone-Macleod are growing accustomed to.

Since last spring *The Last of Us* has been filming throughout Livingstone-Macleod and all of southern Alberta. From High River to Fort Macleod and everywhere in between film sets have temporarily taken over the streets and provided hundreds of jobs to Albertans throughout the region. The southwest corner of Alberta is the most beautiful place in the world, and film companies have noticed. From the dry prairies to rolling hills, from soaring mountains to historical main streets Livingstone-Macleod has it all. In addition to amazing locations, Alberta's low commercial tax rate and the film and television tax credit are great incentives for content creators to choose to film here over other, more expensive jurisdictions.

1:40

In addition to *The Last of Us*, which is the largest film production in Canadian history, filming for series like *Joe Pickett*, *Fraggle*

Rock, and others has occurred in the area over the summer. Some recent releases filmed in my riding include *Heartland*, *Fargo*, Netflix's *Dark Summer*, Kevin Costner's *Let Him Go*, and *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*. *Ghostbusters* is still one of my favourite movies, and I was very excited to hear that a long-awaited sequel was finally going to be filmed and even close to home. Residents in Fort Macleod will be able to have an early viewing of this movie next month, a week before it's released to the public.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's film industry will continue to grow more robust as our government works to diversify our economy and as more film companies realize how great it is to film in Alberta. I am excited to see what will be filmed here next.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Eastern Slopes Protection Act

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again the government is on the wrong side of coal development in the eastern slopes. Even though over 90 per cent of Albertans state that they don't want to see coal mining in the eastern slopes and instead want to see them protected, the UCP is unwilling to take the obvious action. The government could move forward with the Eastern Slopes Protection Act today. The act would do what Albertans want most, ban coal mining in the eastern slopes immediately and set out a strong framework for consultations around the rest of the province.

Instead, the UCP is continuing to delay. The much-anticipated report to the UCP's own coal committee won't be delivered to the minister until November 15, months later than the minister promised Albertans. In the meantime the minister's department is allowing coal lease transfers to happen even though she promised Albertans that coal activity in the eastern slopes would be stopped. Even coal companies are now looking at other opportunities. Montem Resources recently proposed a renewable project producing green hydrogen instead of a coal mine on one of its sites in Alberta. Instead of listening to Albertans who want the province to embrace renewable energy, the UCP will instead delay reporting the coal committee's findings and try to find any way it can to enable coal mining in our eastern slopes.

Today I call on the UCP to stop this and start listening to Albertans. It's time to get serious about protecting our mountains and water. We can do this today by moving forward with the Eastern Slopes Protection Act introduced by our leader. This act would implement strong protections for our mountains and water and create a stronger land-use planning framework for our province. We would all be better off for it. Albertans know it and have made it clear to the government. Even coal companies are now realizing that there are better opportunities than coal mining. It would be prudent of the government to finally get onboard and get serious about protecting our mountains and our water.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Lesser Slave Lake Constituency Volunteer Activities

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With great joy I would like to recognize an overwhelming amount of support from the residents and local businesses of Lesser Slave Lake that I have been witnessing over the past months. Support and good deeds, big or small, help shape a better community for everyone.

In High Prairie an E.W. Pratt high school teacher found a wallet on the road. They went above and beyond to ensure its safe return to its owner. In another part of the community two young girls that go by Gage and Gia raised an astonishing \$287.85 for the High

Prairie & District Victims Assistance Society with a single lemonade stand. Now, that's how to deal with life's lemons.

In September our local Slave Lake Domino's Pizza made a business challenge to support the homeless. The challenge was taken on by local businesses and the Slave Lake homelessness coalition, who received support from the Ice Breaker Hockey Game and Carstar. Slave Lake homelessness coalition also had a successful Thanksgiving weekend thanks to seven adults and five children who gave their time while reflecting on blessings in their own lives and giving blessings to others.

I feel honoured to have been able to take part and play alongside retired NHL players in the Ice Breaker Hockey Game in Slave Lake. With the help of the community we worked together so that the Ice Breaker Hockey Game could support more than just the homeless; we were able to raise money for the Slave Lake Dog Park Society and C.J. Schurter elementary school. A huge shout-out to Shawn Gramlich for devoting his time to ensuring the success of this event.

Day after day these amazing acts of charity continue to take place. They serve as a reminder as to why I wake up every day and fight as hard as I can for the amazing communities that chose me to represent them. To all the individuals and businesses that continue to support our communities during these tough times, thank you for everything you have done and continue to do for others.

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

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is still struggling to get enough eligible people fully vaccinated. We need to do everything we can now to get more Albertans willing to get the vaccine, because vaccines are our best chance to protect ourselves, prevent our health care system from being overrun again, and the best shot at keeping our economy open.

We have just seen what happens when we open up without a sufficient number of Albertans vaccinated. Hospitalizations skyrocketed, ICUs became overwhelmed, and far too many Albertans passed away. That means driving Alberta's vaccination rates up must be the major strategic goal of this government.

Just last month our caucus proposed three key actions to help boost vaccination rates. First, the government should closely examine AHS data on who isn't getting vaccinated and where they live. This should be used alongside detailed polling work and focus group work to understand exactly why people still haven't gotten their shots yet.

Our second call is for a grant program for community groups who can partner with AHS and bring a trusted local voice into these conversations. Many Alberta cultural groups and nonprofits have already done this work with great success. We need to amplify this strategy.

Our third and most important call is for the government to use research and community partnerships to overcome barriers on a case-by-case basis. We are talking about literally going door to door and offering Albertans vaccines right there on the doorsteps. These teams would include health care professionals and also trusted members of the community. We have also seen similar outreach campaigns work with great success in Ottawa, Toronto, and in the U.S. I know that this work can be inefficient and cost money, but it is critical that we reach as many Albertans as possible so that we can start to look at putting the COVID-19 pandemic behind us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Procurement and Economic Recovery

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta's economy recovers, we also need to consider the importance of social recovery so that all Albertans can share in the prosperity of this boom. Social or benefit-driven procurement can be an effective tool in doing just that by implementing more intentional and strategic procurement practices.

Alberta's government spends billions purchasing goods and services. The current procurement system is set up to achieve the best purchasing price. However, an alternative to this practice is benefit-driven procurement. This policy aims to achieve best value. It looks at how we spend rather than spending more. It increases the government's budget efficiency and effectiveness by leveraging current spending to achieve targeted social and economic goals. This could benefit us greatly.

How is benefit-driven procurement different? Goods and services are still purchased through a competitive and transparent bidding process, but adapted criteria and metrics allow business innovations to reach broader community and policy goals. Benefit-driven procurement looks to accelerate economic growth, increase global competitiveness, employment, and skill training, and increase economic opportunity for everyone. The most significant indicator for long-term economic growth is inclusivity. The more Albertans, the stronger the Alberta economy. Fiscal responsibility would increase the value for public money, and finally it would increase innovation by encouraging competition.

So who would benefit from this? The private sector, workers, unemployed and marginalized groups, the government, and Alberta taxpayers. Currently in Alberta the Ministry of Seniors and Housing uses best value procurement for special projects, including redevelopment of seniors' lodges in Manning and Spirit River. In British Columbia social procurement guidelines have supported and cultivated a culture of social purchasing in government for almost four years and coincides with broader work around procurement transformation. Greater levels of social procurement are one of the many aspects that can benefit Alberta.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the call.

COVID-19 Case Increase and Response

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier encouraged Albertans to head to major events like Canada Day and the Calgary Stampede. He told people we were open for good. He labelled those who were concerned as fearmongers and said that they wanted permanent lockdowns. He told people it was safe. His delta variant COVID-19 modelling said something else. The modelling, he claimed, didn't exist. Can the Premier tell this House what his modelling said about major gatherings such as the Stampede and Canada Day?

1:50

Mr. Kenney: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid I had a little trouble hearing the full question, but what we do know is that AHS, Alberta Health tracked carefully the number of positive COVID cases connected to potential transmission at the Calgary Stampede. It was very small, I think not much more than a hundred cases, and of course hundreds of thousands of people visited the grounds. The notion that the fourth wave was somehow created by the Stampede is, I think, completely contraindicated by the data. The reality is that this province was undervaccinated going into the fall, as was

Saskatchewan. We've been hit hard, but we're getting on top of things.

Ms Hoffman: Premier, students and teachers across Alberta communicate through masks every day and don't complain about it.

Mr. Speaker, the modelling said that major events like Canada Day and the Stampede weren't even factored in. The Premier literally had no evidence that what he was telling Albertans was safe to do. Calgary's outgoing mayor reports that he last heard from the Premier in August, before the Premier left for vacation. The Premier assured the mayor in a text message that things were under control. Hard to believe. Can the Premier tell us exactly where he was when he realized Alberta was going to be hit hard by a fourth wave, unlike any other seen in Canada? Was he even in Canada?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, the fourth wave here has been identical on scale to Saskatchewan because we started it with the same relatively lower levels of vaccination.

With respect to the modelling, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Hinshaw, the chief medical officer of health, has released the modelling, which preceded her announcement about moving Alberta to endemic management from pandemic management. She and I have both said that there was an analytical error there. We've taken responsibility for it. We were basing that on the performance of places like Israel and the U.K., with similar levels of vaccination, and we're continuing to improve our modelling.

Ms Hoffman: Where was the Premier when he finally realized that the fourth wave was devastating Alberta way worse than anywhere else in the country? Was he in Saskatchewan? Was he in Edmonton? Was he in Calgary? Was he in Europe? Was he in Asia? What did he do to respond to the crisis that he caused by telling everyone things were safe when his modelling didn't even factor in the concerns that were being raised by doctors and physicians, that the modelling didn't even anticipate that the Premier would tell everyone to go put on a cowboy hat and party at Stampede?

Mr. Kenney: Well, I do recall the member opposite putting on a cowboy hat and partying at Stampede, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that Albertans were able to enjoy a good summer, to get outside, to reconnect with family and friends. I know that the NDP's preference would have been that the province stay in a hard lockdown indefinitely, all through the summer. I think that would have been a mistake as well. If you're going to ask people to massively interrupt their lives when the numbers in July and well into August were fewer than a hundred people in hospitals, with very low transmission numbers – it was a reasonable decision to make in early July.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her second set of questions.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Review

Ms Hoffman: This UCP government showed their true colours again this week when they rejected calls for accountability that Albertans have been demanding following the fourth wave, that was made worse by this government's negligence and incompetence. When the UCP promises a review, Albertans are rightly suspicious, remembering that this government hid the review of the first wave for more than a year. My question to the least trusted Premier in Canada is simple. We called for a judicial review. We called for an all-party review. Will the Premier finally

stop putting his own political future ahead of Albertans' health and wellness and say yes to an independent, all-party review?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government will absolutely say yes to an independent and comprehensive review of Alberta's response to COVID-19 at the appropriate time, when we can look back, when we have passed finally and fully this disease. Doing so right now, while we are still under significant pressure in our hospitals, would require asking senior management of Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, et cetera, to down tools on stretching hospital capacity and limiting viral spread to get involved in a political exercise that would not be productive.

Ms Hoffman: That's not what anyone is asking. People are asking for the Premier's earplugs to come out and the muzzles to come off.

Members of the UCP were being investigated by the Election Commissioner, so this Premier fired the Election Commissioner. The Premier's leadership race was being investigated by the RCMP, so now the Premier is musing about getting rid of the RCMP. At every turn the least trusted Premier in Canada has put his interests over accountability and transparency. More than 3,000 Albertans have died in Alberta, and all Albertans deserve answers and accountability. Will this Premier stop silencing independent voices and finally commit to an all-party review?

Mr. Kenney: I would like to invite the member to take yes for an answer. There will be a comprehensive, independent review of Alberta's response to COVID-19 when we are past, completely, this disease and can take onboard, can reallocate resources, Mr. Speaker, from fighting the pandemic to reviewing the pandemic. In fact, I know the NDP right now is blocking a government motion to have an all-party debate in this place. I encourage them to allow that debate to occur, where they can bring forward their views and their critiques and ask questions.

Ms Hoffman: Every step of the way the UCP has skipped accountability and undermined transparency. This fourth wave grew out of control because this government checked out for the best summer ever. They were more eager to sell hats than they were to keep Albertans safe. Albertans who lost loved ones and those who had to suffer because their surgeries were cancelled deserve answers. They deserve transparency, and they don't deserve this Premier to continue to muzzle people and refuse to have an all-party committee do a proper review. To the Premier. This is your last try. Please make amends to the suffering that you've caused by allowing a full, independent, all-party review.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there's a motion, tabled by the government, to facilitate an all-party debate on the floor of this Chamber to openly and publicly ask questions and to share frank views. There is a clear commitment to have a comprehensive and independent analysis of Alberta's response to COVID-19 at the appropriate time, when we are past COVID-19. But she wants to take the Deputy Minister of Health, the chief medical officer, the president of AHS and put them into a highly politicized context while we're still coping with the fourth wave. That's typical of the NDP, seeking to politicize the pandemic since day one.

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

Workplace Conduct of Ministers and Staff Calgary Ward 4 Councillor

Member Irwin: I want to take a moment to first acknowledge that allegations coming forward today and in recent days are incredibly

troubling, and I know that for survivors, these are traumatic and difficult to hear. We see you, and we stand with you. The allegations reported by the CBC today involving a political staffer in this government are deeply troubling. To the Premier: please explain what is being done to address concerns about the inappropriate conduct of a minister in your cabinet and a former member of the Minister of Health's staff.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you for the question. First of all, I join the member in saying that sexual harassment, harassment of any kind, is always abhorrent, and we must have workplaces and a society that are free of that harassment. People who have been victims of harassment must feel comfortable to come forward, to tell their stories, and to see action taken. In this instance, Mr. Speaker, I was informed by my chief of staff late last fall about rumours circulating about inappropriate comments being made to female staffers by that individual. I was assured that action was being taken, and shortly thereafter that individual's contract ended with the government.

Member Irwin: The House leader and the Minister of Children's Services both spoke to that political staffer with serious concerns about conduct in the government workplace. They told the CBC that they believed the Premier's office was handling this serious matter, but this should be a matter taken to an external investigator. Instead, nothing was done for weeks, and then later that same staffer bringing forward those allegations was fired. To the Premier: will any matter like this in the future now be investigated by an external body?

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate the question, Mr. Speaker. Once again, my chief of staff at the time informed me in late autumn that there were rumours circulating about inappropriate remarks being made to female staffers by that individual. I was assured that this matter was being taken very seriously, that the individual would no longer be working for the government, and indeed his contract ended shortly thereafter. We are appointing an independent review to advise the government on how to improve human resources practices for political staff so that they know that they are safe to come forward to report their experiences to ensure that action is taken.

Member Irwin: We've also seen some troubling allegations when it comes to Calgary ward 4 councillor Sean Chu. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has promised to look into all legal options available to your government to remove Mr. Chu. I've actually personally written the minister to ask that he use any power he has to rectify this terrible situation and remove Mr. Chu from office. The minister has promised an update. We've not yet heard anything. I think it's been about a week. Will he update this House? Will Mr. Chu be removed from Calgary city council?

Mr. Kenney: I thank the member for the very important question, Mr. Speaker. Sexual aggression against a minor is particularly abhorrent, especially when it comes from a person in authority such as a police officer. This matter must be taken with extreme seriousness, and that is why the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has gone to outside legal counsel to seek advice on whether we have any statutory authorities to remove that individual from Calgary city council. So far we've received advice from the departments of Justice and Municipal Affairs that we don't have those authorities, but we are seeking independent advice on that.

2:00

Coal Development Policies

Ms Ganley: The world is changing, and if we don't change with it, we will be left behind. Job creators understand this, but this fact is clearly lost on the UCP government. Investors, developers, and utilities across the globe are transitioning away from coal. In our own backyard Montem Resources announced last week that they will be repurposing their Tent Mountain coal mine project to a renewable complex producing green hydrogen. Why is this government so determined to see our beautiful landscapes destroyed and our vital watersheds poisoned by coal mining?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy is rising.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this Legislature is well aware, we have a coal committee out consulting with Albertans right now. They have had massive input. They have had over 1,000 submissions, 160 or 170 technical submissions. They've had over 70 meetings. They have a huge volume of material to go through from Albertans about what Albertans would like to see with coal development. We are waiting for that report, and we'll be following their advice. I'm looking forward to receiving it.

Ms Ganley: The answer from Albertans has already come back, Mr. Speaker. Tens of thousands of Albertans have said that they do not want coal mining in the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Even industry leaders don't see a future in continuing to scar our breathtaking landscapes and contaminate our water. We need to protect our precious mountains and watersheds, and Albertans do not trust the UCP to do it. Will the Energy minister surprise Albertans and support our request to have the Eastern Slopes Protection Act moved up the Order Paper and vote to pass the bill?

Mrs. Savage: The eastern slopes are already protected while the coal committee is doing its work. Everything is at a standstill. All exploration and development is completely halted. I'm looking forward to receipt of the advice from the coal committee, and it might come back with the exact same advice that the NDP are talking about in their eastern slopes. But we will wait to hear the advice of Albertans. That's why we put it out there for consultation, to hear from Albertans, not from the NDP. We want to hear from Albertans.

Ms Ganley: I think, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been clear.

Many industry leaders are moving to develop renewable energy and have committed to a goal of net zero by 2050 or sooner. Investment decisions are increasingly being based on climate change, including those commitments. Industry investors need an Alberta government that is committed to leading by creating a stable regulatory environment regarding emissions and environmental risk. We must get on a path to net zero. In the meantime can the Energy minister at least listen to Albertans and ban coal mining in the Rocky Mountains?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, we are listening to Albertans. That's why we put in place a coal committee that has talked to thousands of Albertans over the summer, with volumes of information. We're looking forward to receipt of their information. In the meantime absolutely every coal activity in the eastern slopes has been halted. From exploration to development it's completely halted, and I'm looking forward to hearing the advice of the coal committee.

I, too, am very enthused by the Montem announcement that they would be producing green hydrogen and electricity on their former coal mine. I think that is great news. I'm enthused about it.

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

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday evening community members from the Sikh Society of Calgary's gurdwara Sahib were saddened and disappointed to find racist vandalism spray-painted on the road leading to their temple. Albertans of all backgrounds expect and deserve the freedom and protection they need to live and worship safely and free from hatred. To the Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism: can you tell this House when you first heard of this incident and if you have reached out to the community members?

The Speaker: The hon. the associate minister of culture and multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for this question. Albertans from all backgrounds deserve the freedom and protection they need to live and worship freely and free from the threats of violence and destruction. Late Monday night I reached out to the president of the Calgary southwest gurdwara Sahib and reassured him that the government of Alberta is committed to addressing racism and hate-motivated crime in this province. The president then said to me, and I quote: I am so honoured to hear from you; together we can beat the racism and hate crimes, and we really appreciate your call.

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

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that all Albertans expect and deserve the freedom and protection they need to live and worship safely free from hatred, to the Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism: what is being done to ensure that newcomers and members of faith organizations are made to feel safe in their own community?

The Speaker: The hon. the associate minister of culture and multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. The province is taking several steps to address hate- and bias-motivated crimes. A community liaison on hate crime is being established to engage with the communities most affected by this criminal activity. A new hate crime co-ordination unit is being established to improve crime prevention and mitigation practices throughout the province. We're also reviewing Alberta Crown prosecution service policies and procedures related to hate crimes to make sure they are clear, effective, and up to date.

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

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that hate and racism have no place in Alberta and given that this government has taken action through the creation of the Alberta security infrastructure program, to the Minister of Justice: what has the Alberta security infrastructure program done to help protect religious and multicultural organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that important question. I can assure the hon. member that this government has responded quickly to recent increases in hate crimes. The emergency Alberta security infrastructure program has provided over \$250,000 in rapid grants to help vulnerable organizations with security needs, and we continue to accept grant applications.

I do want to assure the Sikh community that this government is with them and will work with them to ensure that they are safe and well respected in our province.

The Speaker: My apologies both to the Minister of Culture as well as the Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism for the name challenge.

Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant

Member Ceci: Through a freedom of information request we have come to learn that as of October 3 4,346 Alberta small businesses are still waiting to see if they are approved for a small and medium enterprise relaunch grant. These businesses are waiting to see if they are approved for funding to help them in the third wave. We're now in the fourth wave. This instalment for funding opened up in April. That's six months ago, Mr. Speaker. To the minister. This is not operating at the speed of business. What is taking so long? How are you as a minister making some businesses wait six months with no solution?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, since we've put in place the relaunch grant, we've had many rounds. We provided supports to 125,000 businesses across Alberta. Notices went out for further information in September to the 4,000 businesses that remain. We're asking them to provide us with information. This is for everybody in this House: if you have constituents that have relaunch grant applications out there, bring them to our office. We'll gladly work with them. We sent them notices in September to ask them for further information. We'll gladly work with them to help make sure that the money flows out. Again, this isn't a partisan thing. We are diligently going through each one.

Member Ceci: Given that we have learned through the FOIP that 4,645 businesses have been outright denied – that makes up 18 per cent; that's way too high, Mr. Minister – and given that small-business owners told us the absurd ways they were denied, for example, some were denied because they filed using the wrong Internet browser or they were unaware that their application was stuck in draft; others were denied after waiting months on a department response, only to be told they had to provide more information, and they couldn't do it in the timeline, what does the red tape minister think about this? This looks to me like loads of red tape to get small businesses the help they need.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I will say this again with all sincerity to this entire House – I don't want to get into a tit for tat in this Chamber – we will diligently work through any remaining ones that are out there. Sometimes an e-mail address is not in there correctly. We're trying to do our best to respond to each of them. Everybody with an outstanding application received a notice from our department about two months ago. We're trying to get to the final information from these businesses. If there are businesses out there, bring them to our office. We'll gladly work with them to get their applications processed. We want to have that money go out.

2:10

Member Ceci: Given that this grant is nothing more than a failure and given that our leader stood in Calgary this morning with Ciara Havishya, a sole proprietor and tattoo artist in Calgary who is still waiting for her application to be processed, and given she says that the funding is too little and far too late for people like her who relied on SMERG for relief and given that Ciara is one small business owner of thousands that has lost all confidence in this minister and this government, will the minister commit here and now to get the remainder of the applications processed quickly and go back and

rereview every business that's been denied? This government has failed small businesses.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, as I've already mentioned twice – maybe the member opposite should deviate from their notes – we have gone through every application, and we sent out notices with the information provided to our ministry. Every single one has been reached out to. If there are businesses out there – again, this is not a partisan thing. We want to help these businesses and get these applications done. The vast majority of the applications were done within 10 days. Ten days. Now we're doing the actual manual follow-up for the remainder. We want to get these done. Bring them to our office. We'll gladly follow up with businesses, but we don't have all the information.

Technology Industry Development

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has only increased our reliance on technology, and as a result we've seen a global tech boom. Here in Canada it's been no different; we've seen record amounts of venture capital investment across the country, including here in Alberta. I want to thank all of the entrepreneurs who have worked so hard to attract this capital. But while other jurisdictions continue to set records for investment, Alberta has stalled. In fact, Calgary is now last in the country for investment, but the UCP keeps bragging about the numbers. Is the minister actually happy with being last in Canada in tech industry growth?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, sometimes the opposition throws you a big beach ball, and it's time to hit it out of the park. The member opposite obviously can't count. When they were in government in 2018, venture capital investment, \$100 million; 2019, first year of this government, \$220 million; the year after, \$455 million in venture capital. This year we're on track for over \$500 million of venture capital. One other fact. Last year, their government: 1,200 tech companies in Alberta. Right now? Over 3,000. That's a record to be proud of.

Mr. Bilous: Given that in the last budget the UCP promised to lead the country in tech investment by 2030 but since then we've actually fallen behind other jurisdictions, given that Toronto has set a new record every quarter of this year – they've raised \$4.4 billion so far while Calgary has raised \$270 million. Not even close to keeping pace. Why are we losing ground to other jurisdictions when this government promised to be a leader? And, Minister, please cut the rhetoric. Albertans are looking for an actual plan to deliver on Alberta's future.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, just these last few months we brought in place venture capital tech accelerators Plug and Play, 500 start-ups, world-leading brands with their Canadian headquarters right here in Alberta. That's going to give us access to venture capital and customers internationally. The members opposite when they were in office had just anemic growth. We weren't even on the radar. Right now Calgary is in the top 20 when it comes to tech centres. Edmonton, for the first time in its history – let's put this in context for the members opposite from Edmonton – they finally broke the top 50 just this year.

Mr. Bilous: So now 20th place is acceptable for this minister.

Given that the UCP cut the Alberta investor tax credit despite pleas from the tech community not to do so, which caused companies to leave the province or bypass us all together, given that we've been consulting on ways to attract capital so we can actually lead the country in tech investment and given that we are consistently hearing

that we need to restore the investor tax credit and create an Alberta venture fund and I know the minister is hearing it also, will the government join us in calling for the reinstatement of the investor tax credit and the creation of an Alberta venture fund that will make us a leader in tech investment?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the audacity of the NDP to talk about chasing away investment. When they were in office, they chased away tens of billions of dollars of investment for Albertans that would have created thousands of jobs in this province. Whereas before we were a flyover province – don't go there – now we've got tech sector people coming to this province. Not only are we cutting edge when it comes to energy with Dow Chemical, the first of its kind type of petrochemical facility; we also have tech sector investments coming here, major internationals, Mphasis. We've got RBC innovation hub coming to Alberta. It's a good time to be in tech in Alberta. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

COVID-19 Protective Measures at Postsecondary Institutions

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Postsecondary education can be a very stressful time for our young people in this province. There are papers, tests, and new social situations. COVID takes all this stress and makes it significantly worse. Our students are struggling. One of the added uncertainties during this time is that COVID requirements to attend school differ based on the institution. To the Minister of Advanced Education: is there anything being done to ensure a more smooth and uniform approach to COVID requirements across all postsecondary schools in the province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can take the opportunity to just quickly acknowledge and thank and appreciate the leadership at our various postsecondary institutions and their staff for what they've had to endure and the challenge over this pandemic and doing so while helping to encourage and facilitate the academic progress of our students. When it comes to the proof of vaccination programs that our institutions have put in place, of course, we believe in giving our institutions the flexibility and autonomy to make the decisions that are most important for them, their campuses, and their communities.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that examples like NAIT are accepting only vaccinated students and Lakeland is accepting vaccinated, negative test result, and medical or religious exemption students and given that some of my constituents have been forced to put their education on hold indefinitely due to this and given that this causes an immense amount of stress for our students, to the same minister: are there any solutions being discussed to ensure the futures of our students are not compromised?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. I recognize, of course, that it's a very frustrating time for our students and for all Albertans. Perhaps I can take this opportunity to encourage all students and staff within our postsecondary system to get the vaccine if they

haven't yet. To answer the member's question, I mentioned a moment ago that the priority is to ensure that we give our autonomous and independent postsecondary institutions the flexibility that they need to make decisions that are appropriate for their communities, their campuses, and their student bodies, and I know many of them are doing that as we speak. Once again I just want to encourage anyone watching and those participating to take the opportunity now to get their vaccine so we can get through this pandemic.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that the future of our province relies on our young people to attend trade schools and universities so that they can go out into the world and make this province better and given that this state of confusing COVID requirements from schools is not sustainable and given the impacts that this has on the mental health of our students, to the same minister: is there any estimation on when this may end and when our students can return to their education without fear of having to leave it behind because of confusing COVID requirements to attend?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In the vast majority of circumstances most students are back to in-person learning. Of course, there are some programs and courses that are continuing online, and we're also seeing a growth of online delivery. I think there have been some lessons learned from the pandemic. I know in speaking with a lot of our postsecondary leaders that they're seeing how they can continue to integrate virtual delivery and online learning into the classroom. As to when this will end, you know, unfortunately, I wish I had an answer for the member. I think the fast way that this can end is if we all get vaccinated.

Thank you.

Legislative Assembly COVID-19 Protective Measures

Mr. Dang: It's a good day when we can all truly work together. Yesterday I took the advice and listened to the advice of the Government House Leader, and I'll be moving a motion today that introduces a real vaccine passport program for this Legislature. Now, Albertans are looking for us to lead, and since the Government House Leader bragged about how he was leading by example, can I report to the people of Alberta that the government will show the leadership he claims and support this motion for a real vaccine passport program?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member may be confused. He has no ability to move a motion in this Assembly this afternoon, so I'm not sure what he's referring to. He may ask for consent of the Chamber to do so, which I can tell you that we will not provide. You know why? We've already laid out and established how vaccinations will work inside this Chamber, respecting each and every democratically elected member of this Chamber's ability to take their seat and represent their constituents. Our caucus is vaccinated and/or following the testing protocols that have been put in place by the Public Service Commissioner and will continue to.

2:20

Mr. Dang: Given that the answer appears to be that this government continues to refuse to lead by example and given that the Premier,

Health minister, and UCP caucus actually ruled out vaccine passports, and then the UCP Party asked Alberta to send them money to fight passports, but given that when finally faced with the facts around this government's negligence and nearly collapsing health care system, they reluctantly brought one in, can I ask again – and Albertans are watching. Will the Government House Leader assure Albertans, who want to see this government finally show some leadership, that the UCP will put public health first and support the motion?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Conservative Party caucus is following the Public Service Commissioner's recommendations. We're proud to do that. Again, I want to stress that the best way to be able to fight COVID-19 is for everybody to get vaccinated. I have to ask the hon. member, through you to him: is there some concern with his caucus that we are unaware of such that he would need to debate that? This caucus is vaccinated or following the quick test protocols that have been put in place by the Public Service Commissioner and the chief medical officer, and we will continue to. I'm getting a little worried about the NDP now, though.

Mr. Dang: Given that not a single Albertan believes a word coming out of that minister's mouth and given that the government has admitted that the vaccine passport has played a key role in increasing vaccination numbers and given that businesses support this program as it allows them to open while also protecting their staff and customers and given that such a passport program, if put in place here, would allow us to even reopen the galleries to allow Albertans to come and watch their Legislature at work inside the people's House, what does the House leader suggest I tell the people eager to return to this Legislature? Is it that they will be welcomed or that this government's ideology is keeping the front doors locked?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I as the Government House Leader and my caucus inside this Chamber are not responsible for deciding when people can come or not to the Chamber. That is up to you and your staff. I trust you to be able to figure out that process based on the chief medical officer's recommendations and the circumstances with your staff. But again to the hon. member: is his caucus truly vaccinated? [interjections] Well, good. They say yes. Our caucus is vaccinated or can do a quick test as per the recommendations. This issue is already settled before this Chamber. Let's get to work this afternoon on important legislation.

Federal Child Care Program

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Speaker, in April the federal government announced \$30 billion in funding for provinces to implement \$10-per-day child care across the country. Province after province has signed over \$12 billion in agreements, but not Alberta. These provinces are now months ahead of us. According to multiple statements by the Premier as recently as last week he will accept nothing less than a deal with no strings attached. It would seem that the biggest hindrance to a deal with Ottawa is, in fact, the Premier. I tried yesterday, and I will again today. To the Minister of Children's Services: does the Premier have your full support on this? Does she support asking for a deal with no strings attached?

Ms Schulz: As I have informed the member opposite a number of times, we agree that child care is absolutely, unequivocally important to our economic recovery. That is why we worked hard to present the federal government with an Alberta-made plan, one that our Premier supports, that will truly help even more families to find affordable, accessible, high-quality child care. As I said before, we were ready and willing before the federal election. Obviously, that election presented us with a bit of a delay, Mr. Speaker. We are back at the table. We submitted a plan that's supported by a number of nonprofit and private operators, business leaders and is based on what we heard from Albertans.

Ms Pancholi: Sounds like a difference of opinion between the Premier and the Minister of Children's Services.

Given that in the last three weeks alone I've received over 1,800 e-mails from parents calling for \$10-per-day child care and given that the minister indicated in August that a deal was imminently about to be signed, before the federal election was called, but since that day there's been no update although Ontario and New Brunswick have continued to negotiate with Ottawa this whole time, to the same minister. There is a new cabinet minister in Ottawa, and based on August statements all you should require is some signatures. Can you confirm to Albertans that a deal will happen this week? Easy question.

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite likes to think she knows what happens during negotiations, but I can tell you that they don't happen on Twitter. My office has in fact had lots of conversations with the federal government since the election has concluded. We have a new minister in this portfolio, who I am very much looking forward to reaching out to. Discussions have been going very well. Once again, instead of basing our plan on ideology, like the members opposite, a plan that picked and chose winners and losers, picked and chose parents who were going to be able to access supports, we're not doing that. We have a made-in-Alberta plan supported by private and nonprofit operators as well as business leaders across the . . .

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

Ms Pancholi: Parents don't want politics; they want a deal today. They wanted it three months ago. Given that the average cost of child care in Alberta is \$51 per day, often costing families more than their mortgage or rent, and given that fees are even higher in places like Fort McMurray, where \$65 per day is common, and given that in July – yes, July – our caucus did the work for the UCP and put together a proposal that would leverage \$3.8 billion in federal child care funding and save families an average of \$9,600 per year, will the minister guarantee that an agreement with Ottawa will bring at least \$3.8 billion to Alberta and average fees will drop by 50 per cent next year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that what I will do is continue to fight for Albertans. Albertans let us know a couple of weeks ago that they want their government to fight for a fair deal in this federation. We are not going to leave dollars on the table. But we are not going to listen to the members opposite based on their record in child care. We are going to meet the needs of private and nonprofit operators right across Alberta, support the choices that Alberta parents need when seeking either re-employment, employment, or educational opportunities, and we are optimistic that we will get to a deal with the federal government. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Energy Industry Opposition

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, last week the Department of Energy released the Allan report, a culmination of almost two years of investigative work. The report outlined the tactics that activist groups used to damage Alberta's economy. To be clear, an attack campaign against Alberta energy is an attack against our province and the livelihoods of our citizens. To the Minister of Energy: do you have a sense, in real dollars, of the amount of investment that was used against the oil and gas sector, and what was the impact on industry because of this co-ordinated plan?

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

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The numbers that the commissioner found were profoundly large. He found that Canadian-based environmental initiatives received \$1.28 billion of funding. Hundreds of millions of that were directed and traced towards marine initiatives, marine initiatives like the tanker ban that killed Northern Gateway pipeline. Hundreds of millions of it were directed towards land-based initiatives, like the Great Bear rainforest, where, apparently, you can't build a pipeline. But all of it was difficult to trace and find, and that's why his number one recommendation was related to transparency and disclosure.

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

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Albertans are outraged at the foreign-funded campaigns targeting our oil and gas sector in an attempt to block development and given the Allan inquiry clearly shows there are sophisticated, well-financed, and co-ordinated organizations targeting our energy sector, to the minister: was there anything contained in the report that you were not aware of, something that took you by surprise, and did this report confirm what we all feared? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What was surprising was that these campaigns to target our energy sector were actually bigger and more formidable than we ever expected. We all had heard theories and suspicions about these antienergy campaigns, but what this document does is that it traces them and puts all of that information, 650 pages, in one place, and we can learn from that. We learned that these groups operate like an industry unto itself. It's money looking for a cause, and they're going after the next thing, whether it's hydrogen, LNG, natural gas, or carbon capture.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you again, Minister. Given this damning evidence and given that the commissioner did not say that there was no illegal activity – rather, he found no evidence in accordance with his mandate as finding illegal activity was beyond the scope of the inquiry – and given that Albertans lost their jobs, businesses bankrupted, and families were harmed, to the same minister: would you consider turning over this report to a special committee of the Legislature to subpoena and question under oath those identified as taking part in this damaging campaign to determine if further action is necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The inquiry was never meant to be something to censure, impugn, or punish anyone. It was meant to find and document campaigns targeted at our energy sector. We can't change the past, we can't change how we got here today, but knowing how these campaigns operate, we know that we can predict they're coming after the next thing. So, yes, I believe there's some merit in looking at a special committee to examine what these campaigns are going after next, to learn from what they've done in the past, and make sure it doesn't happen again. So, yes, I think there's merit in that.

2:30

Rural Health Care

Ms Sweet: The crisis in rural health care created by the former Minister of Health continues unabated. As of yesterday 22 health care facilities across Alberta had bed closures, and as we deal with the terrible fourth wave of COVID-19 because of the decisions of this Premier, we can't even keep acute beds open: 46 per cent of acute-care beds were closed in Fort Vermilion, 41 per-cent in Hanna, and the list goes on. Will the Minister of Health apologize to Albertans for the crisis this government has created in the rural health care system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As the hon. member knows, we've been dealing with the fourth wave. We've had to cancel a number of surgeries, and to all Albertans where we had to cancel surgeries: I apologize for that. But we needed to deal with the fourth wave. We increased capacity, but now the numbers are coming down. The numbers are coming down in terms of cases. The numbers are coming down in terms of ICU beds filled with people with COVID-19, so we are reducing our ICU surge capacity, and the reason for that is so we can actually increase surgeries and start getting caught up on that.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that we're going on five months with no obstetric services in Sundre, as new and expectant mothers struggle to gain access to critical services, and given that we're going on six months with weekly closures of the emergency department in Elk Point with every single bed out of operation, which puts lives at risk, and given that doctors, nurses, rural residents, and the Official Opposition have all been calling on this government to develop a plan to address the crisis in rural health care, to the minister: it's impossible not to be incompetent more than your predecessor, so where is the plan to address the crisis in rural health care? Give us specifics.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural health care is a very real issue, and we recognize that. Part of my job as appointed as the new minister by the Premier is to look at capacity and to look at capacity not only to be ready for future COVID waves but capacity to catch up on surgeries, and that includes in terms of capacity in rural areas. I appreciate the concerns that MLAs from both sides of the House have raised, concerns of rural capacity. We are going to be focusing on that, and we're going to be focusing on getting out of this wave and ensuring we're ready for anything that COVID has to throw at us in the future.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that the crisis in rural health care has a negative impact on communities and drives people out of rural Alberta and given that it has a significant effect on our rural economy

and our broader economic future, to the Associate Minister of Rural Economic Development. First question: tell me what he's going to do to take some action on rural health care in the province. We need to build a new future for rural Albertans. They need to be in living communities that have the services that they need. What are you going to do?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Rural Economic Development.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question, and it's a very important question. I know that for me and, I think, the rest of rural Alberta, there's probably a collective sigh of relief to know how concerned you are as well. I know that the MLAs on this side care very deeply about this. The first thing we're going to do is a comprehensive consultation starting today, actually, over 20 sessions, over 900 invitees from across the province. We're going to get a lay of the land and hopefully bring back some tangibles at the start of the new year. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Income Support Supplemental Benefits

Ms Renaud: Last June I called on the government to reverse the cuts they've made to income support programs. As usual the UCP said: we haven't cut anything. Thanks to a FOIP we know that 2,689 fewer people received just one of the supplemental benefits that allow them to survive. At the same time, homelessness in Alberta has increased substantially, and service providers are worried about capacity. Will the minister stand up to this Premier's ongoing agenda of harming the most vulnerable people in Alberta or just do what he's told?

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

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I am, with the government, proud that we support vulnerable Albertans for their shelter needs. Last year we committed \$49 million to help Albertans. As a social worker I committed 28 years in my professional service for this field. I'm looking forward to continue doing the great work our government started.

Ms Renaud: Given that the depth of poverty has steadily deepened under this government and given that the UCP provided no additional money to homeless supports in this year's budget even though the UCP's mishandling of the pandemic means agencies have restricted capacity – they need more space, not less – will this minister do the minimum and commit to giving additional funding to shelters to all Albertans so they have a safe place to access every single night?

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

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address the question the opposition member raised. I suggest they do their homework, get the number right. In terms of the shelter benefits, we reviewed the policy. The shelter benefits have been there since 2006. There's no change in policy. However, there are some offices that interpreted the policy inconsistently. Through internal review we are clear with that. As of today every Albertan who would benefit from that shelter benefit will . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has the call.

Ms Renaud: That's incredibly disappointing.

Given that the income support BFE program is less than \$700 a month for a single person, the additional shelter benefit was needed for people to even have a chance at having a safe place to call home. In seven months nearly 3,000 people have lost the supplemental benefit. Given that the UCP allowed shelters to close across the province and that they're leaving municipalities to deal with growing poverty themselves, the UCP are more interested in fighting with them than solving problems. Can the minister explain how his cuts to the poorest in this province contribute to the health of this province?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, they showed in the press conference using the wrong number to talk about what they're asking for. There is no cut in the shelter benefit. The policy has been there since 2006, and today every Albertan eligible for the benefit will be supported with that. We are proud of the strong stance we took. We're proud that our government is committed to helping vulnerable Albertans during this difficult time. We'll continue to do that.

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

COVID-19 Protective Measures and Health Workforce

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Back in August AHS announced that they'll require all employees and contracted health care providers, including physicians and other front-line health care workers, to be fully immunized for COVID-19 by November 1 but recently adjusted to November 30. On October 19 president and CEO of AHS Dr. Verna Yiu announced that around 7 per cent of employees had yet to submit proof-of-vaccination paperwork, not to mention employees that have already resigned. To the Minister of Health: how many AHS employees are part of this unknown 7 per cent in each region, especially in my own constituency?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I'm able to report to the House that both Calgary and Edmonton zones have about 5 per cent of AHS staff undeclared. South zone has 7.5 per cent, north zone – and that's where the hon. member's riding is – is near 10 per cent, and central zone has 11 per cent undeclared. Now, Alberta Health Services is watching these numbers very closely, and we expect these numbers to rise as more staff declare their status in advance of the November 30 deadline, particularly among casual staff.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the new policy will apply to all AHS staff and given that hospitals in my riding have already seen high turnover rate and low recruitment of health care professionals by AHS and the college, as I have said many times in this House, and further given that AHS's mission is to provide patient-focused quality health care that is accessible for all Albertans, to the same minister: what are you doing to address potential staff shortages in health care because of this policy, and will any consideration be given to rapid testing or antibody confirmation for these employees, who I personally encourage to get vaccinated to support their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thanks again for the question from the hon. member. I know that many communities across our province, particularly in rural areas, continue to be concerned about quality care and coverage. I also want to thank our rural health care workers for the tremendous work that they're doing in helping us get through this fourth wave. Now, my first priority as Minister of Health is to build our health system capacity, including in rural areas, now and permanently. AHS has put in a dedicated team to support recruitment efforts and established critical staffing task forces in the north and central zones to address these issues, and they remain focused on ensuring that we have the resources to ensure we can deliver services across the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in Cold Lake we will lose a family physician due to this policy as the doctor's request for exemption has been denied and that this loss could have a detrimental impact to the entire health system in Cold Lake and given that I've stood in this House many times to discuss shortfalls in recruitment of health care professionals to prevent a situation just like this, once again to the minister: what will you do to support rural areas facing a sudden loss in local access to health care they deserve?

2:40

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you again, and thank you for your continued representation of the interest of your constituents. Let me say clearly that Alberta Health Services is working on a solution so there'll be no gap of service in Cold Lake. Recruitment for a family doctor with anaesthesia to Cold Lake is already under way, Mr. Speaker. If required, locum services will be brought in from other communities to ensure coverage while the recruitment goes through. The only way to prevent future shortages is to ensure that we build capacity and flexibility into Alberta's health care system. That is my mandate, and that's what I'm going to deliver.

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

Notices of Motions

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

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

Be it resolved that despite any standing order or practice of the Assembly and for the duration of the 30th Legislature or until the Assembly passes a motion rescinding this motion (a) an individual, including a member, may not physically access the Legislature building or any other area in which the proceedings of the Assembly, including its committees, are being conducted unless the individual provides proof of one of the following to a Legislative Assembly Office employee designated by the Speaker for this purpose: one, full vaccination against COVID-19 by means of the quick response code made available to the individual by the government of Alberta; two, an exemption from vaccination based on a protected ground under the Alberta Human Rights Act; or three, in the case of an individual who is 11 years old or younger, the age of that individual as provided by a parent or guardian; (b) the office of the Speaker is responsible

for administering the conditions on access to the Assembly and its committees as prescribed in clause (a); and (c) this motion comes into force on passage.

I have the appropriate number of copies here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give oral notice of Government Motion 101, sponsored by the Premier. Unfortunately, there were some omissions to the notice given yesterday, so this notice is intended to correct that.*

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 the 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 federation to initiate constitutional change [and that] this right implies a reciprocal 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 enumerated in the Constitution, and the right to pursue responsible development of natural resources.

Schedule

Amendment to the Constitution of Canada

1. The Constitution Act, 1982, is amended by repealing section 36(2) thereof.
2. This amendment may be cited as the Constitution amendment, [year of proclamation].

In French:

Modification de la Constitution du Canada

1. Le paragraphe 36(2) de la Loi constitutionnelle de 1982 est abrogé.
2. Titre de la présente modification: Modification constitutionnelle de [l'année de la proclamation].

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 76

Captive Insurance Companies Act

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 76, the Captive Insurance Companies Act.

A captive insurance company is an in-house insurance solution where the insurer is wholly owned by the company or entity it insures. In the current insurance market, with limited availability and high prices, a captive is an alternative to traditional insurance.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to help Alberta businesses insure their risks. Enabling captives is an important step to attract insurance capacity to the province and help create options for commercial entities currently underserved by the traditional insurance market. This includes Alberta's key economic sectors such as energy, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and many others. Enabling captives is expected to grow Alberta's insurance sector and position the province for economic growth and diversity.

I'm pleased to move Bill 76 for first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 76 read a first time]

Privilege

Misleading the House

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order, and I am prepared to rule on a question of privilege that the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall raised on October 25, 2021. The question is with respect to statements made by the hon. Premier in the Assembly during Oral Question Period on Wednesday, June 16, 2021. The Member for Calgary-McCall provided notice of the question of privilege to my office at 11 o'clock on October 25, 2021, with a copy to the hon. the Premier and the Government House Leader, thereby meeting the notice requirements under Standing Order 15. I also note that this matter was raised at the earliest opportunity as a requirement under the standing order.

In his submissions the Member for Calgary-McCall referenced a comment that the Premier had made in response to a question posed by the Member for Edmonton-City Centre during Oral Question Period on June 16, 2021. In his question's preamble the Member for Edmonton-City Centre remarked, "Yesterday we learned from the deputy chief medical officer of health that this government is in fact engaged in modelling of the highly contagious . . . COVID-19 delta variant and will have results this week." The member went on to ask the question to the Premier: "Will you commit here and now to releasing the delta variant modelling to Albertans by the end of this week?" The Premier's response, in part, was that there was "no delta variant modelling."

The Member for Calgary-McCall's remarks made may be found on page 5649 of Monday's *Hansard*, and the original exchange can be found on page 5591 of the June 16, 2021, *Hansard*. The Member for Calgary-McCall also cited a document called Shifting from Pandemic to Endemic, which he claims shows that the modelling on the COVID-19 delta variant existed at the time that the Premier made the statements, June 16, in the House. You may find these remarks on page 5650 of Monday's *Hansard*.

The Member for Calgary-McCall claims that the Premier, in making the statement that there was no delta modelling, not only made a misleading statement but also that the Premier knew that the statement was misleading and was also deliberately misleading the Assembly in doing so. In his submissions the Government House Leader disputed that claim made by the Member for Calgary-McCall with respect to the statements of the deputy chief medical officer of health made during Dr. André Corriveau's televised press conference on June 15, 2021, saying that no claim was made with respect to the delta variant modelling.

The Government House Leader further disputed the claim that the document Shifting from Pandemic to Endemic, released on September 2, 2021, was proof that the delta variant modelling was in fact proceeding by the time of the Premier's response, as he did on June 16. You can find these remarks in yesterday's *Hansard* at page 5674.

2:50

Hon. members, this is now the third time during the 30th Legislature that a question of privilege concerning the matter of deliberately misleading the Assembly has been raised. As I have noted in my rulings and commented on at some great length on June 8, 2021, page 5315; July 7, 2020, at page 1764; and again on June 25, 2019, at page 1174 of *Hansard* for those days, this type of question of privilege, which purports that a member made statements to deliberately mislead the Assembly, is and may be treated as a contempt of the Assembly, as indicated on page 307 in *Erskine May's Treatise on the Laws, Privileges, Proceedings and*

*See page 5673, right column, paragraph 6

Usage of Parliament, 25th edition, and as noted on page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. “The provision of deliberately misleading information to the House or one of its committees by a Minister or by a Member has been raised as a matter of privilege.”

As noted in these previous rulings, the test for deliberately misleading the House is very difficult to meet. This test is set out in the fourth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, pages 775 and 776. The test has three elements. The statement, one, in fact, must be misleading, the member must have known that the statement was inaccurate at the time the statement was made, and the member must have intended to mislead the Assembly.

Hon. members, I’ve reviewed the press conference of June 15, 2021, in which Dr. Corriveau provided an update on the COVID-19 situation. Among other things, he answered questions. I note that in one response to a question from a CBC reporter about the severity of the delta variant and whether it could be taking over as the dominant strain, Dr. Corriveau states: I don’t think that we’ve done that modelling yet; it is a work in process.

Concerning the document *Shifting from Pandemic to Endemic*, this report was released in September 2021. Although it refers to modelling in June, there is no clear indication when in June the modelling had in fact been completed at the time. Accordingly, I accept the Government House Leader’s assertions that the Premier had no knowledge of such modelling, and therefore I find no prima facie breach of privilege.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Motions under Standing Order 42

Legislative Assembly COVID-19 Protective Measures

The Speaker: We are now at the notice of motion for an SO 42 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion that is urgent and pressing and which I already read out today under Notices of Motions. I’d also like to acknowledge that pursuant to Standing Order 42, I’ve already provided the appropriate number of copies to this Assembly as well as providing your office an advance notice of my intention to move this motion.

Mr. Speaker, despite the announcement by the Government House Leader to the media on October 5 that all members of the Assembly would be vaccinated by October 25, there continue to be no rules in this place. None. That is urgent for two reasons. First, it creates a significant risk of the transmission of COVID-19 and bringing it back to the communities and people all across this province, the same communities and people that this government says that it wants to keep safe. Second, it’s impeding our democratic process and public access to this Chamber and to debates and processes of this House.

The Government House Leader has publicly stated that one or two of the members of his caucus are not vaccinated and subject to regular testing. The number changes depending on the day, and he has refused to consider any formal proof of vaccination. Another member of this Assembly, when asked about their vaccination status, declined, saying to the question, quote: I won’t tell you; it’s private. End quote. He went on to say that no one told him testing would be needed.

It doesn’t have to be this way. It is possible to make this House safe for both MLAs and the public. Access to the gallery and the building

is closed right now to outside visitors. Albertans are banned from entering into their place of representation and debate.

The Speaker can apply the same rules to the Assembly that apply outside of the Assembly. To get a drink or go for a coffee with friends or meet for dinner, Albertans need to provide proof of vaccination through a QR code. The same applies to go and cheer for the Oilers or the Flames. We must pass a motion urgently in this Assembly to keep it safe, to stop the spread of COVID-19, and to open this House to Albertans once again. Other Legislatures are doing this. We urge the Assembly to pass a motion to give the Speaker that authority to enforce this.

Yesterday in this House, in the Assembly, the Government House Leader agreed that there is a process in place to do just this, as was confirmed by your office, Mr. Speaker, on Monday to the CBC, and I quote: the Speaker enforces the rules the Assembly sets out; currently there is no rule around vaccinations or testing. End quote. This motion will fix this. What we currently have here is a double standard. We have one set of rules for Albertans and another set of rules for the UCP, typical for a caucus that continues to give its members raises while seeking cuts from the rest of Albertans.

This motion is an opportunity to prove to Albertans that members of the government caucus, members of the UCP caucus, hold themselves to the same standards and expectations as every other person in their place of work. It’s an opportunity once again to open public access to this gallery for good. I urge every single member of this Assembly to provide unanimous consent for this motion and allow the Assembly to debate in this place and decide collectively the rules that should apply in this Chamber and building. The public may not be allowed in here yet, but they definitely are watching, Mr. Speaker. It’s something that I think they expect our government to do better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent, but the standing order also allows the Government House Leader or a member of Executive Council to respond for up to five minutes prior to the question being put.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don’t think I’ll take the full five minutes. There has been a lot discussed on this issue over the last several weeks. I do want to correct some inaccuracies from the Deputy Opposition House Leader, from my perspective. First, I think it’s important to be clear that there is no standing order that I am aware of that has been changed or brought in by the government that has in any way made a decision about access to this place. As you are well aware, those are conversations that take place often with your office, with advice from the Clerk, who is responsible for her staff. And, of course, determinations are being made at different times during the pandemic of when or not the gallery would be open. But I think it’s important that we make clear that there is nothing that has come from my office or from the government that in any way is dictating how that will go.

In regard specifically to the motion that the hon. member is asking for consent to move today, first I want to point out that my understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a similar motion recently voted on at the Members’ Services Committee, of which you are the chair. I have the utmost respect for our standing committees, and this was debated at length at that committee, and a vote was undertaken. That alone would make me hesitant to slow down government business for the day to relitigate an issue that had just been in front of a standing committee.

Further to that, I have been very clear – and let me be very clear for the hon. member. He may not be fully reading news stories or

listening to my comments in detail, but to be very, very clear, all of our caucus but one individual have indicated that they have shown to leadership that they are vaccinated. Two individuals have chosen to continue to take quick tests, one because he is dealing with a medical circumstance, as I've spoken to the media about, and the other because he would prefer to take a quick test rather than show his vaccination status, as is his right according to the Public Service Commissioner, who has recommended he be either vaccinated or have a test every 72 hours, with which the government caucus is complying.

Mr. Speaker, I have had indication from the NDP that all of their caucus is vaccinated. I don't know if they've checked all of their records. I hope they have, like we have. I don't know. Given their preoccupation with this, I suspect that they may be a little bit – maybe they haven't done that. Maybe they're looking for my help to check their membership . . .

Member Ceci: Why do you keep doing this?

Mr. Jason Nixon: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo asked me why I keep doing this. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hate to interrupt Sundre's favourite son as he responds to the SO 42, but it was very clear and audible that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo said: why do you keep messing everything up? I suspect the ambient mics in here picked that up as well. That is certainly language that would cause disorder in this Chamber, so 23(h), makes allegations against a member, and (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives," and, frankly, (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

3:00

I encourage you, Mr. Speaker, of course, to use your judgment in ruling on this point of order, but I do believe that that language is certainly unnecessary in this Chamber, and it was directed at a specific member, which I believe is a threshold you have used in the past when ruling on such points.

The Speaker: Is there anyone that would like to provide comment?

Member Ceci: I'll stand to withdraw and apologize.

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider it completed as well though I don't usually take advice from the worst Finance minister in the history of the province.

Debate Continued

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, we have provided to you a letter confirming the vaccination status of our caucus and making very, very clear that we will be working with the Public Service Commissioner's recommendations as a caucus. My understanding is that you and the Clerk's office are also complying with the Public Service Commissioner's recommendations when it comes to staff inside the Chamber, and I think that is the appropriate thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be spending significant periods of time derailing the business of this House so that the hon. member can debate something that is already settled, and that is that this caucus and their caucus will continue to follow the public service recommendations, according to them. Definitely, we have put that in writing. I will table that letter. We certainly will not be providing the members consent for their continued ongoing campaign to try to derail the business of Albertans inside this Chamber. No matter how many times they bring it forward, it will not change.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent to do away with the regular business of the Assembly to proceed immediately to Standing Order 42.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 75

Arts Professions Recognition Act

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and move second reading of Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act.

The arts and culture industries are an important part of our economy and an important part of Alberta's recovery, and this is especially strategic and important and timely as this is actually the 50th anniversary of the first legislation and the first Minister of Culture in Alberta. What that shows us is that very clearly art and culture have been important to Albertans for half a century. What we're doing with this bill is that we're both affirming and advancing the commitment of government to the entire sector because it is important, it continues to be important, and it will be. We have a great respect for our artists, what they bring to us, what they contribute. That's why I'm moving this bill forward.

Visual and applied arts and live performance industries contributed \$1.3 billion to Alberta's GDP in 2019, the most recent numbers I can get you. The legislation encourages everyone to invest in our most important resource, which is people: talented people, capable people, creative and energetic people. Individuals and organizations and businesses all need to pay artists fair value for their skills, for their work, and for their investment in materials. That should go without saying.

Mr. Speaker, professional artists in Alberta face many challenges. The majority are self-employed. That's a challenge in and of its own. They receive substantially less income than other types of workers. They can struggle to gain respect for their work or for their career choice, both in the community and sometimes even from family, from businesses. This lack of respect sometimes results in challenges to fair compensation or even a safe work environment. These are all long-term challenges that have been around for a long time.

It's important that we in Alberta address these now, especially in light of the top-up effect of COVID-19 if I can put it that way. The pandemic has put many artists into an extremely difficult financial situation as they have experienced a loss of income owing to restrictions, a loss of income owing to the inability to perform or display their work or whatever the situation may be, so we need to make sure that artists in Alberta are never asked to work without fair pay or even denied to be paid after, as we heard yesterday. We

need to make sure that artists are never subjected to unsafe working conditions in the commission of their work.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, this is why we need legislation to help protect artists' economic and contractual rights. We need to make sure that emerging and established artists alike do not give up on a viable career path because of the difficulties they might experience. As Minister of Culture I'm proud to put forward the Arts Professions Recognition Act in order to formally acknowledge artists' rights and contributions to Alberta. Bill 75 will help make artistic enterprises sustainable and profitable by promoting the right of artists to enjoy the same social and economic benefits available to other workers.

This legislation also affirms the rights of artists to form associations and to participate in that. Artist associations are essential to their economic security as they provide very important resources such as pay scale agreements, working condition protocols, and also assistance and guidance in professional procedures and business things as well. Madam Speaker, the government of Alberta in this case will lead by example. Government departments, agencies, and public bodies will be required to model the way with contracts that include safe work environments and fair payment for their work. Government will demonstrate how private and nonprofit employers and contractors can uphold the professional nature of artists' work.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the act will emphasize in law Alberta's commitment to the freedom of artistic expression here in Alberta. Artists provide us all with new perspectives, and art can be an important tool to build bridges, deepen our understanding of ourselves as human beings, reduce multicultural tensions, even racism. The ideas expressed by artists through their work should never be silenced in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, following the passage of this act an implementation plan will be developed to support this legislation. This will include communications materials, contract templates, and information for artists about their contract rights and economic rights to supplement what is already available to them through their associations. Implementing the plan will also be an important step to meeting our government's ambitious commitment to grow Alberta's culture industries by 25 per cent over the next 10 years. This goal recognizes that our cultural and creative industries are essential to our long-term prosperity and diversification here in the province of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, over the past year and a half the arts have been a beacon of hope and healing in a very troubled time for all of us. I firmly believe that the arts will help us through recovery and beyond. I'm asking all members of the House to support this bill because what this bill does is not only establish in law these protections and rights, but also it makes a very strong statement on the 50th anniversary of arts and culture in Alberta that artists are welcome in Alberta, artists have a home in Alberta, and artists can succeed in a career in art here in Alberta. They can raise a family, they can make a living, and they can thrive in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak to artists, really, and to this Assembly about the importance of art and artists. I guess I'm following the minister's introduction. I think this is his first time being able to present a bill at second reading in this place. I'm happy to be corrected if I'm wrong, but congratulations on that. I know that the staff in your office and in the department and yourself are probably

excited by the opportunity to come together and create a piece of legislation, and I want to recognize that it takes a village to be a minister and to bring forward a bill. I want to honour that contribution here right now.

3:10

I guess my first question to the minister that I hope will get answered, ideally today in second reading or possibly at a later stage but certainly before it's passed – the minister talks about his commitment, the government's commitment to paying artists and signing contracts, and I assume that's something that we didn't need to bring a bill forward today to remedy. I look forward to knowing about some of the history on this and if there is a problem indeed and that's why this bill came forward. Certainly, one would expect the government to act with all ethics and fairness when it comes to negotiating into an agreement, any kind of workplace exchange of goods. I imagine that people would expect their government would do so in an ethical and transparent and upright way. If there are examples of how this was not happening in the past and that's why this bill needed to come forward, I certainly welcome that information to help us have a greater understanding.

Basically, there is a section of definitions that we'll probably unpack a little bit more later. Then there is a very short section about written contracts that essentially says that public entities should engage in a written contract with a professional artist before the work "to produce an artistic work or product; to present an artistic work or production to the public; [and] to engage in an enterprise that circulates or disseminates artistic works to the public, including lending, leasing, exchanging," and so forth. The primary meat of this bill is really saying that public entities "shall not contract with or retain the services of a professional artist for any of the following purposes, whether on a [nonprofit] or [public] for-profit . . . without having entered into a written contract." Requiring that a written contract be entered into: that's the substance of the bill, primarily.

I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on how the government defines artists, and again we will go into that in much greater detail. I have to say that I think the preamble is really lovely as written. To the drafter of that: I really appreciate it. I think referring to the work of artists as being "valuable" and that they're "professional members of society," I think the reference to "fairly compensated for their work" – the number of artists who've been asked to do things for free over the years is huge.

Of course, one of the things artists are regularly told is: well, it'll be good for your exposure if you do this for free. But, you know, exposure doesn't put food on the table. Exposure can kill people, right? Like, if you have too much exposure to the elements, it actually does the opposite of what people often tout as being an appropriate way. While all of us, I'm sure, are here because we love the work and we want to do it, we also need to be paid. Everyone who works in any workplace needs to be able to put food on their table, needs to be able to have a place to live, should be able to live with dignity, should be able to have bread and roses. That's sort of the founding principle of a lot of workers' collective organizing, to ensure that they can have sustenance and that they can also have some of the beauty in the world.

I'm going to take a few minutes to talk about my riding because anyone who hasn't had an opportunity to explore it in great detail probably should. I have the honour of representing Edmonton-Glenora. For those of you who don't know Edmonton super well, it's a little bit west of here and a little bit north, not much at all. It's a very quick commute. The beautiful 124th Street district is one of the areas that certainly a lot of artists showcase their work, sell their work.

We have a number of galleries. I'll just highlight a couple: the Lando, the Scott. Bearclaw is one. We've got the Alex Janvier pieces *Sunrise* and *Sunset* on display here, and many of his pieces are probably on display today at the Bearclaw and definitely have been over his very successful career. It showcases Indigenous artists, mostly western Canadian, and it is a great place to pause and reflect. Most of it is visual arts, but there are some crafts that are also sold there, very special, detailed needlework and beading, in particular. There are many formal galleries where people can go in and buy fine art.

There are also some less formal pop-ups that happen, too, including through the sales that happen along the 124th Street market on Thursday nights. We just had the last one a couple of weeks ago for this season, but it will start again in the spring. That's a place where starting artists or younger artists or artists who don't have a professional storefront on a regular basis regularly will lease a table and set up at the market and have an opportunity to showcase some of their work.

Last year we did a little pop-up in the park across the street from my constituency office, and there were about, I think, eight artists, maybe nine who featured some of their work there. It was a very fun, safe-distanced, outdoor event and an opportunity for some artists to be able to showcase some of their work.

Many artists said to us how tough the last almost year had been at that point – of course, it's been far longer now – because one of the first things that got cut were indoor sales, right? We all remember when nonessential businesses were closed, and that has extended for many things like craft sales and art sales that happen typically around this time of year leading up to the holiday season, a great opportunity to buy gifts. Many of those have been forced, under the government's current rules, to disband for the season, and that is definitely hitting artists really hard. So if the government would want to focus some of their efforts into finding ways to bring back successful opportunities for artists to showcase and sell some of their goods in a Safeway – like, I would love to see the government step up and provide the supports for contact tracing and provide the grants necessary to be able to run things like pop-up art shows and craft shows over the next several months.

Giving some small grants to businesses, you know, is something. It's a start, I guess, but there are many people who don't have a long-term business but do have a three-day sale that features many local artists that aren't in a position to be able to do that this year under the government's current regulations. That's something really tangible and tactical that I think the government could work to address to support artists right now and in an immediate way that wouldn't require them going into a legal contract with government. It would require the government to step up and put some additional supports in place to support these types of sales, that are often a big part of the community during this time of year.

I want to give another example of something that another order of government has done, and that is the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Both, I believe, have put in clauses into their legislation around when public infrastructure is built that I believe is 1 per cent – happy to be corrected; it's been a while since I've looked at that legislation for those orders of government – being invested in public art in relation to that infrastructure. It does need to be at that specific site. For example, when the downtown library was under construction, there was a contract entered into with local mosaic artists to create an interactive exhibit outside the library that involves the arts. It's those types of public art initiatives that have been done at the city level that I think enable more artists to be full-time artists.

One thing I've learned about the artists in my life is that they are incredibly good at diversifying their income streams because they

can't rely on just public art paying the bills or they can't rely on just private art sales to art collectors paying the bills or they can't just rely on teaching art lessons alone to pay the bills. They usually do all of these things.

Of course, people have had less money to engage in some of their own purchases of art over the last year and a half, so this again could be an opportunity for the government to truly support a diversified economy, add to the culture and vibrancy of our province province-wide, and create more opportunities for people to live in the fields that they so love, as highlighted by the minister in his opening remarks.

Those are two examples of things I would have loved to have seen in this bill. Perhaps the minister's office is working frantically right now to write amendments to add in some of these components that I know will have a financial impact, but I know that that financial impact will pay huge dividends because, of course, folks who earn money locally, including artists, often spend the vast majority of the money back in the local economy. So if we have opportunities to invest in creating more craft sales and art sales in the next few months, that will of course have people spending money at them, and those artists will in turn spend money back in our communities as well.

I think that those small investments could pay really big dividends in terms of supporting in a very small way a diversified economy, because we know that when there – oh, I don't have the number top of mind, top of hand, but maybe I'll get it for committee or for third. But when I met with folks about the rebuilding of the Roxy, they were showing that if you invest a dollar in this sector, it turns this much in terms of economic prosperity for all; if you invest in this other sector, it does this. And the two that did the most were investing in early learning opportunities, including child care, and investing in the arts. It's interesting when you think about it. Like, I really want the Roxy to finish being rebuilt. It's under way in the city, and I think it's getting closer every day, but it's still not open, and it's a location.

3:20

But when I think about it, when people typically go to the theatre or at least when I go to the theatre and many people I do know, going to the theatre is one expense. You're buying that ticket. You're going there. You're often doing other things in the area around the theatre before or after, maybe having a drink or maybe purchasing something at a neighbouring business. So it definitely creates splinter, positive economic opportunities for those around it, but mostly it makes us all feel good. It makes us feel connected.

Really, I have to say that the arts and artists in particular, I think, got a lot of people through the last two years, whether your exposure to the arts was through Netflix at home or whether it was enjoying the pop-up chalk art displays that happened at places like farmers' markets around the city or whether it was you taking a little bit of time to actually focus on your own art and your own talent in whatever that might be, picking up an instrument, taking a virtual music lesson. I want to say thank you to artists for, I think, trying to help a lot of us process what was happening in society, find ways to reflect on beauty, and find ways to distract from so much of the suffering that was and is happening in our world and particularly right here.

I want to highlight a few artists whom I've gotten to know over the years. We mentioned Alex Janvier at the beginning and his two pieces that are in this place and, for those of us who were part of the last legislative session, not only being able to take in the beauty of this internationally recognized artist every day – we feel very lucky – but also having a chance to hear him talk about his art. Often I think we learn so much more when we have a chance to engage with

artists. I appreciate and reflect with much gratitude on the opportunity we had to actually hear from the artist himself in this place.

I also want to thank Erin Pankratz. When I was door-knocking in what must have been early 2015, one of the houses I door-knocked at had a really cool mosaic tile house number on it, and then when the door opened, I saw another mosaic. I said: "Oh, who's the artist? Obviously, you're a big fan. Who's the artist?" It was the homeowner. She was the artist. I really enjoyed getting to know her over those years and being able to see her work be celebrated. For those of you who might head to the southeast when you're driving and see the construction happening for the LRT, in Argyll there's one of her beautiful mosaic pieces on I guess it's an underpass for the LRT that's on display there. That's one example of having the opportunity to do some public art. Sustaining artists who've given so much back to all of us and will continue to contribute so much to us in the coming years is my hope, of course.

Terry P. Daly lives just very close to me and does a beautiful exhibit. Really, I think he has always featured some of his art in his yard or in his home, because, of course, it's a good way to keep your overhead low if you're able to promote some of your work through your own space, but especially has done so during the times as we respond to COVID, hosting outdoor art shows in his yard for his own art as well as other artists over the last two years and making them more frequent and stretching them out. Often, to make sure that people could distance, he'd extend the hours and find ways to make it work for so many. He definitely explored a lot the concept of health care workers and their sacrifices during the COVID-19 pandemic through a lot of the portraits that he did over the last year and a half. So thank you to Terry for the beauty that he's brought to the world through this dark time.

I also want to recognize Aaron Paquette, a newly re-elected city councillor here in the city of Edmonton. Those who've been on the 11th floor, also known as the sky palace, probably have seen some of his work featured in that space. I think it's incredibly powerful, and I hope we have more of his work through the archives here for the province of Alberta. It was Aaron Paquette who was the artist who updated the LRT station mural that, of course, tried to sort of present Bishop Grandin and residential schools in a positive light. I was so relieved to see that Aaron Paquette, an Indigenous artist with Métis and Cree ancestry, was procured by the city, prior to him becoming a city councillor, to paint a piece that talked about resiliency and reconciliation as a counter to that. I think the Bishop Grandin mural has since moved on. I think finding ways to highlight Indigenous artists in various fields is something that we all benefit from when working towards truth and reconciliation.

A new artist to me, Huong Nguyen – and I'll provide the names of all these people to our friends at *Hansard* – is a constituent, and I've recently fallen in love with the work she does painting portraits of the homes in the riding primarily, but homes in other parts of the province I'm sure she'd be happy to do as well. It's really an interesting way to see, especially as so many of us have spent more time at home over the last two years than we typically would. I know that I've had a little more time to spend gardening, which has been a fun enjoyment, but to be able to take the work we've done in our homes and to try to beautify our communities and to be able to sort of honour that through a portrait of a building that you wouldn't normally think to maybe – a lot of people have painted this building. Let me tell you that. A lot of people have painted the Legislature over the years, but not a lot of people – and I know a lot of people have taken aerial photos of their homes, particularly their farms, but I hadn't seen a lot of portraits of your own house before, so that's been kind of an interesting thing, too.

Of course, many visual artists, including photographers, captured family portraits on people's front steps during this period of time as well. It's been great to see how creative and resilient artists can be.

I also want to recognize folks in the performing arts, including Andrew Phung, who is probably best known for being Kimchee in *Kim's Convenience*. He offered very early on to the current government to find or to be one of the people who contributes to the economic diversification strategies of this province as it relates to arts and artists. He made that offer up to the ministers responsible for jobs.

Unfortunately, we haven't seen a big emphasis on the contributions of artists and the arts to what the government thinks of in terms of economic diversification. It's usually focused on – it's got some components that we support as well, of course, hydrogen, geothermal. That's great, and I absolutely want Alberta to continue to be an energy leader and have diversified energy opportunities for all Albertans, including renewables and green energy, but there's also a role to play for the arts. It's a huge sector, one where people are often extremely underemployed or undercompensated, at least, and one where I think we have an opportunity to remedy that moving forward.

I'll also do a shout-out to a favourite musician, Lindsey Walker, who I know. Like I said, many artists diversify. They don't just rely on one stream. Imagine being an artist who performs across the country. Of course, travel was something that stopped, and live performances were extremely limited over the last two years. Working to diversify their income, I think that they teach music lessons and always have, but not being able to do that in person has certainly complicated a lot of those types of economic relationships as well, so a nice shout-out to her.

There's an artist who worked in this building for many years who, I think, through some of the decisions made over the last two and a half years, doesn't anymore, Dave Clarke. He toured a lot of folks through this building over the years and did amazing – brought the building to life through his tours. He's a very talented playwright and actor who I'm proud to represent.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder that the new Standing Order 29.1(1)(a) is now allowed to be used.

Seeking speakers for second reading of Bill 75. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wasn't sure how that was going to work. I didn't want the intervention part. I was wanting to speak to the bill, so that worked out eloquently. Thank you for guiding us, as always, through the new process, and thank you to the minister for bringing this forward, this much-needed item to recognize the artists.

Oftentimes as Conservatives we get painted, I would argue, unfairly of not appreciating the arts or being involved in them. Potentially, sometimes it seems to be rather centred around the big centres, you know, as Edmonton and Calgary have a rich and lustrous arts community, performing arts and otherwise. A lot of us like to come in and partake in those festivals.

3:30

Some of my fondest memories as a young farm kid are coming in and going to college in the city for the first time and taking part in the Fringe Festival and those type of things. For me, it wasn't quite the same growing up in Wildwood, Alberta. Down the street our festivals were a little bit different, so Fringe Festival was always a lot of fun.

But as an elected official, as the MLA for God's country out in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, we have some absolute gems. I was so excited to be able to meet some of these artists, and I'm going to

tell you a little bit about Gossamer gallery out in Wabamun. If you haven't been there, please take the trip. It's a husband and wife, a couple, who bought this little section, this little area, and what they did was they created a working space. What we have there right now is several artists that have come in to do works in the area. It's always open. The fudge is fantastic. If you want to go for a drive, head on out there, and then follow it around. The fudge is absolutely fantastic. You'll start out with the fudge and the nice trip, but you'll stay for the art. Fudge, really good fudge. The Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity is a fudge fan. I'm going to get you some for that. It would be good. The fudge is fantastic. I just can't speak enough about that.

But inside this space it's literally taken over their building. They started off as one little corner of it. Now it's expanded out. They took a second bay and now the entire building itself. The artists there are ranging, everything from one lady, and I can't remember her name offhand – I apologize – but she's a tradesperson. She's a welder, and she's taken her craft of, you know, welding up pipe and doing those things to doing cut-outs and then starting to work on different pieces. Absolutely outstanding, the craftsmanship on this. From a welder like myself anything would look like grapes and bubble gum kind of glued together when I work. The precision that she does is amazing.

There is another lady there; her craft is woodwork. She gets into clockworks and making these beautiful clocks. Well, now what's happening is they're actually collaborating between these two. So you've got this space where these artists are bringing together their art forms and collaborating to come up with different models.

Then there is a lady by the name of Tammy Taylor. Now, this lady, a self-taught farm lady, studied with Bateman. She's known as the Canadian version of Robert Bateman. For anybody who loves wildlife photographs or any of that type of thing, it's breathtaking. It's absolutely breathtaking, and the scenery that she does is right from her own backyard. When you look out her window, looking over the area, everything from red-tailed hawks to bald eagles when they're coming through the area, mule deer, all along those lines.

I ran into another gentleman as well. I'm not a craftsman. Some of my kids: they're pretty awesome at doing crafting and everything else. I'm clumsy. I make a stick man look bad. But Dave Hogg, another gentleman up from that Rich Valley area, what he does with stonework and carving, in that sense: absolutely amazing. He did some pieces on residential schools that just evoke emotion and bring everything to the forefront that would make the most stalwart of men or stoic of figures bring a tear to their eye. Literally just amazing.

Reg Faulkner: here is a gentleman from the area that I bought a few of his different artworks, too. He's just around the corner in Fallis, which itself happens to be a little thing. There are artisans that have taken up residence there as well, and they've got art studios, so both pottery and that side. But Reg is an interesting cat. He's retired now. He was always doing photographs while his work – actually, he worked in transportation, Minister. He was out on the road lots, and he also worked for CN Rail. Between CN Rail and transportation and having his own survey company, he was busy for a number of years. He was always snapping photographs, and he ended up getting a little bit better and a little bit better and a little bit better. Then he got to the point where he started transitioning this into both the graphical arts and then painting. He's transitioned these works, and I have some on my wall.

Arguably, the coal mining can be a bit of a thorn in here, but Reg felt very much tied to that area where we generated most of the power for the province for a number of years, and he paid tribute to some of those coal miners out there. Now we're seeing that go the way of the

dodo, and things transition. But the amazing artistry that he put together of looking at some of these night pictures: anyone who's worked on industrial sites will understand some of that picturesque beauty at 2 or 3 in the morning on the night shift, when all you've got out there is this blackness and this vivid blue and the lights and the stars out there and a piece of ironwork in there, out in the distance. Those men and women that he paid tribute to to keep these lights on for us for years, putting in those toiling times and efforts, to capture that and that artistry: to me, that was absolutely amazing. The trains, as well, where he's picking that up, and then he transitions over and looks at the beautiful Lake Wabamun, with the heron coming through.

These are the artists that we have in our own backyard, reasonably priced. If you have kids, they were welcoming. During the COVID restrictions a lot of these artists were taking in and bringing in more people and teaching them. Reg went further to work with the First Nations out in our area in the Paul band. You know, some might say it's cultural misappropriation or taking it, but he's one of the only Caucasian artists that's allowed to go to these festivals and the sun dances and the powwows. *Allure* magazine – actually, it's a national Canadian magazine – had his picture, and the princess from there was from the Paul band. He's further taken that craft and gone as an outreach, because he's of that nature, to teach people in the Paul band how to take their own photographs. He's taken a bunch of teenage kids, started teaching this art so they can transition, develop their own businesses, and start doing this as well. It's a benevolent thing.

Minister, by recognizing some of these artists within our area that are grassroots, a lot of them very conservative-based in principles as well – although I'm not biased. I'll look at art from anyone. I'll buy it from anybody. I don't care. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder always, as it seems, and one of the nice things about talking to these grassroots local artists is that they're not snobs. They're not art snobs. It's kind of like the ones that go in the winery and, you know, put their finger up, and it's only good if you spend \$150 for a bottle where it could actually be something you'd thin paint out or take paint off a brush with, but as long as it has the label, it's good. These artists are not like that. It's whatever works for you and to spend time with them, some of the most wonderful people you'll ever meet.

With this, Minister, I thank you for bringing this forward, and I thank all of the folks out in our area for doing what they do. I really appreciate you taking me in, showing me your arts, and letting me have a chance here to speak about it today, because it's highly underappreciated. We've got a lot. Please come out and check out Gossamer gallery and get a chance to talk to some of these artists.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I, too, believe that this is an incredibly important piece of legislation. I highly welcome it. Having been an artist in the community myself for a number of years, there are a number of challenges that artists face, of course.

Before I get into that – and I will kind of get back to the topic at hand – this will probably be the only opportunity that I'll ever have to pay homage to one of the greatest artists that actually impacted my life inside of this Legislature. The reason why I bring him up now is because he was an artist that also stood up for workers' rights and would have been highly behind a piece of legislation like this, and that artist's name was Victor Jara. He was a Chilean singer, songwriter, theatre director, was highly involved in the arts during the period, well even before the period of Salvador Allende and

during the time of President Salvador Allende in Chile helped the arts really grow in terms of being a vanguard of the people. He brought the voice of everyday people into the arts and basically used it as a mirror to show back all the issues, the concerns that people were facing in Chile at that time.

Now, I promised I will bring this back because there are artists who currently call Edmonton and Calgary and Alberta home who were also impacted by Victor Jara, but before I talk about that, I want to talk about Victor Jara's demise because it's impossible to talk about him without mentioning how he passed. Victor Jara was such an amazing voice for the people. He was so powerful in making sure to stand up for human rights and social justice not only in Chile but all over Latin America and the world. He sang songs about injustices that were happening all over. Unfortunately, when the military coup that happened on September 11, 1973, came into place, just two days later he was found at the university, where he was teaching theatre, and he was essentially abducted by the military. He was put into a concentration camp, essentially, that the military built using the national soccer stadium in Chile, in Santiago.

3:40

Now, when he was captured and actually put inside the soccer stadium, people recognized who he was. Because of his powerful voice and the fact that he had inspired so many to stand up against injustice and for human rights, the other prisoners that were being held inside the soccer stadium were inspired by his presence and, with his leadership, started to sing songs of the Popular Unity government at that time, the coalition government. This, of course, angered the military guards, and they proceeded to beat him and with the ends of their rifles, with the rifle butts, smashed his hands so that he could never play guitar again. They actually laughed at him and told him, "Play your guitar now, Victor Jara," when his hands were bleeding and crushed.

But that didn't stop him. He continued to sing even having been beaten, his hands crushed. He continued to sing an important song called *Venceremos*, which is essentially "We shall overcome," which reminds me of many, many other human rights and social justice leaders that sang similar songs and lyrics, saying: we will overcome this injustice. Because he continued to sing, one of the military soldiers then shot him in the head. Then the rest of the soldiers decided to open fire on him. Later on his body was thrown into a shantytown on the outskirts of Santiago, where his body was found riddled with over 40 bullet holes.

This just demonstrates that you can kill an individual but you can't kill an idea, and you can't kill the example of standing up for freedom, for human rights, for social justice, for workers. It is the artists of our time that give power to that voice and give inspiration to the people and give hope that a better day can come, a day that is more just.

As I was saying, many Chilean artists who now call Edmonton home and Alberta home were inspired by Victor Jara. They continue to sing his songs and also create new ones about the realities that we're facing here in Edmonton. I want to take this opportunity – because it's not just artists from the Chilean community or the Latin American community, but it's all ethnically diverse communities that find an incredible challenge. A lot of these people end up coming here, end up having to work sometimes two, sometimes three part-time jobs – jobs are essential – when back home they were considered professional artists. They were considered professional artists, and then after immigrating here, going through the permanent resident process, and now becoming Canadian citizens and being full citizens of this place, have issues and barriers that they confront in order to be respected professional artists here in Edmonton and Alberta.

I actually applaud this piece of legislation because I think it's going to get us there. I think there are still some challenges, that I will highlight in a moment, but I just wanted to give voice to some of these artists, these professional artists, from these ethnically diverse communities who, you know, love being here in Edmonton. They love being here in Alberta. [interjection] I'll give way.

Member Ceci: Madam Speaker, I just want to intervene briefly. It's an incredibly powerful story about Victor Jara. I wonder, of course, about South American artists, if there is a difference in your feeling, your mind, your experience between South America and the nurturing of artists there and Alberta, particularly for artists who have immigrated here. Are there homemade support systems that they have been able to incorporate into their lives together to continue to provide their great work?

The Deputy Speaker: Just a quick reminder on interventions to still speak through the chair and into your mic.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I just wanted to say that in Latin America the arts foundations take funding artists very seriously. I was going to get to that particular point, but first let me just wrap up giving voice to some of the artists from ethnically diverse communities.

Of course, when these individuals come here, you know, they're still in the process of learning English, and I've had the opportunity to meet with so many of them in my own constituency. As I often say – and I often brag about it – 50 per cent of Edmonton-Ellerslie is of ethnically diverse communities, and I just love it. I love being in an ethnically diverse constituency and working with the people there to give voice to the issues and concerns that they have.

Of course, one of them is this particular one from artists of ethnically diverse communities. Of course, there is sometimes a language barrier, and often they don't know how to navigate the system in terms of actually applying for funding and these kinds of things. This is a challenge that we need to figure out how to overcome. Now, I know that the government provides information in various languages, so perhaps the minister can consider, when it comes to actually applying to arts funding here in the province of Alberta, that perhaps the information could be provided in other languages as well. This is a humble suggestion that I offer to the minister.

Now, of course, because this language barrier exists – I mean, they can speak English enough, like, to hold a conversation, but when you get into the more intricate details of how to apply for something, this is where they're finding a little bit of the problem. Having perhaps a broker that could just help them through the process of applying, specifically for those artists that English is their additional language, would be of considerable help to actually getting some of these professional artists not only recognized as a professional artist from the community but actually getting them funding and getting them on the path towards being able to be highly sustainable as an artist here in the province of Alberta.

I mentioned, of course, that a lot of these individuals are having to work two or three jobs, so I'm highly supportive of the fact that this particular bill wants to make sure that artists are remunerated in the appropriate way for the value that they are bringing to us as Albertans and to our society.

The minister actually mentioned murals, and here's where I'm actually going to go back to the member's question because murals in Latin America are just amazing. You can go to probably any major cosmopolitan centre or even a rural area or region in any Latin American country, and you can see these amazing, amazing murals dedicated to the history of the place, the history of the people

there. Of course, I'd be remiss not to mention one of the great Latin American muralists, Diego Rivera, who is an amazing, amazing artist, who was actually able to capture the history and the struggle of the people of Latin America in many, many murals that he ended up painting, one of them even being for the Rockefeller Center in New York.

3:50

Essentially, artists give that opportunity to actually confront the ills of our time, and I do believe it was the minister that actually mentioned in passing the issue of race and racism, that we're currently confronting here in Alberta. Having artists be able to have the freedom to actually address these issues . . . [interjection] I'll give way to the hon. member.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, hon. member. With regard to the information the minister was sharing at the beginning, it was very helpful to hear the minister. The minister talked about a 10-year goal. I don't know if this is where you were planning to go, but a 10-year goal to increase arts and artists' remuneration – I think that's probably included in all that – the world for artists to increase at 25 per cent within 10 years: do you see anything in this act that would lead you to believe that that's there? I know the implementation plan hasn't been developed. The minister mentioned that. What would you suggest needs to be in the implementation plan going forward?

Member Loyola: Thank you very much to the hon. member. Of course, it's a very important question that the hon. member asked. I think that what needs to be under debate or basically to be an understanding is the fact of the way that the arts have actually been funded in the past. Now, from my knowledge, we have an incredible foundation here in the province of Alberta that actually provides funding for artists, but as I was saying before, professional artists that are from ethnically diverse communities have had issues actually accessing some of the funding in the past. Not all, but, I mean, it's a process that you have to learn how to go through, and it's a complex one when you have a language barrier, however slight that language barrier might be, but it is a challenge.

I think that one of the things that's really important to understand is how funding for the arts has kind of taken place in the past and how it's been framed. Historically, if you look at it, there always seems to be a patron. A patron was the individual that somehow needed or commissioned a piece of work for their benefit, whether that be to highlight their status, whatever the case may be, but this is historically how the arts were funded in the past. I think it's really important that now we have a system whereby we're using Albertans' taxpayer dollars that actually then fund artists. These artists actually need dependable, consistent funding so that they can actually do the work because essentially they're doing this work – I'll repeat it again: they're doing this work for the people of Alberta.

Of course, when you have that kind of patron mentality – and the reason why I bring this up is because a lot of the funding is conditional. Artists have to find some way to provide additional funding outside of the funding from the government. It's kind of coupled, right? So I think that this needs to actually be taken into consideration because, of course, we're still in that model where they need to get funding from other sources in order to get the funding from the government.

Now, the reality is that the majority of these artists are then going to nonprofit organizations to make the connection so that they can actually get funding, breaking away from the patron model and going to an NGO instead, who has a particular issue that they want to highlight. For example, they'll commission pieces of art. They'll commission poetry, music, you name it. But then the relationship is a

reciprocal relationship that is created between nonprofit organizations and artists here in the province of Alberta. The issue, though, and as the minister well knows and as we've highlighted in the House . . .

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

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to congratulate the minister on presenting this bill, and I'd just like to talk about a couple of my local artists that I'm very, very proud of. They may have been mentioned before in the House: Mr. Alex Janvier from the Cold Lake First Nations. We attended a smudging here, right there on the floor. It was quite interesting, a lot of fun. He put up *Sunrise and Sunset*. I'd like to point out that it's the only place in the world that the sun rises in the south and sets in the north, which is kind of cool. That goes without saying. I'm very proud of Mr. Janvier. For folks that don't know him, if you've been in Rexall Place and you look down from the top onto the entryway, there's a huge mosaic that was done by him as well. He's a world-renowned artist from Cold Lake First Nations. He's got a great gallery up there. He's got a lot of paintings in Portage College, that he's done for the college as well. He's always willing to share.

One of the things I'd like to point out is the humbleness of the folks I'm going to talk about, Mr. Janvier being one of them. Fantastic sense of humour, quite eager to take a poke at you and not even smile about it: he's quite a character. He is very well recognized and respected world-wide.

The other fellow that I'd like to talk about that folks might not know about, from just outside on the Legislature Grounds here, is Mr. Herman Poulin. He created the sculpture of the fleur-de-lys to recognize francophone culture in Alberta. As well, the construction of the nun with the stained glass out front is his. He's got, literally, sculptures in every Legislature across the country as well as the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. I believe there's also a commemorative bronze in the city of Edmonton that he presented a couple of years ago with a Treaty 6 medallion brought up into life size. He also has one of those in the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

I'm very, very proud of Herman. I've visited his little workshop out in St. Paul. He lives right in the town of St. Paul. He's very entertaining, a very energetic fellow. He does a number of community events. He works in schools. He goes and volunteers his time teaching kids art in school, his particular form of art, which is quite interesting and easy for kids to pick up on. I'm very proud of him as well.

He also does a little thing called live art at functions – he's done it at hospital foundation fundraisers – where he will sit all through the night while people are eating supper and do a painting, a still art or whatever, and then he'll auction that off. So you can actually take photographs of him painting it and then purchase it. He's done very well raising funds for local charities as well.

The third guy I'd like to talk about is Mr. Stewart Steinhauer from Saddle Lake, who's done stone sculptures. If you're ever driving out to my area and you go down highway 36, just as you're on the curve there just south of Saddle Lake, he's got a bunch out there. It's very, very distracting because they're beautiful. He also has a number of those stone sculptures at Blue Quills University. He's becoming very world-renowned as well.

Just, you know, in my little constituency these three guys really stand out, but there are a number of other up-and-coming artists that are out there that will definitely benefit from this act. So I thank you again, Minister, for bringing it forward and just wanted to stand up and say how proud I am of these artists in my community.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others wishing to join the debate? Edmonton-City Centre, followed by Camrose.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to join debate on Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act. Now, I could probably speak for much longer than 15 minutes about the arts alone. Certainly, I think there are a number of things to say about the bill itself. I appreciate that we've had a fair bit of time today spent just recognizing artists in the province of Alberta. I had the opportunity to work in the field of the arts. That was my ambition as a young man. I went through the music program at MacEwan University here in Edmonton and spent about a dozen years bouncing around the Edmonton music scene as a piano player, doing a bit of singing and doing some work as a studio engineer. So I have had some personal experience of the challenges that artists can face in, certainly, a very unique industry in many respects, that presents its own set of challenges for how we ensure that people are fairly compensated for what I think we have all acknowledged today is, in fact, work: work of value, work that deserves respect, and work that deserves fair pay.

4:00

I do appreciate that the minister has brought forward this legislation to express a general sense of support for those principles, and that is largely what this is. Of course, it's right there in the title of the bill. This is a recognition act. There are not a lot of specifics within this bill that take significant action. That said, that does not mean the bill has no value; it means that we recognize that this is a small step in supporting artists. But there is much more, I think, that can be done within the powers of the government to show real and significant support for the arts. They are deserving.

An excellent article in the *Edmonton Journal* today from Mr. Fish Griwkowsky, himself a patron and participant in the arts scene here in Edmonton for a number of years, offered some excellent reflections. He talked about the fact that as of 2019 we saw that the visual and applied arts and live performance industries contributed about \$1.3 billion in GDP in Alberta, sustaining about 20,000 jobs. That's a significant contribution. He notes, of course, as the minister noted again today, that he believes this legislation will help the government's goal of growing the arts sector by about 25 per cent over the next decade.

I think this legislation certainly will not hinder that goal. It may make a small contribution to that goal. I don't think the basic provisions here are going to make a significant contribution to that goal. Nonetheless, recognition is good. It's important, but it is only a first step. There is much, much more that needs to be done. Mr. Griwkowsky, in fact, notes that this act does not provide any extra funding or make any alterations to the granting structure that's run by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. And he does note that over the last two years, under the current government, in fact, funding under the Alberta Foundation for the Arts has seen roughly a 5 per cent decrease each year.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I appreciate the recognition from the minister in this bill and the ambition towards better contracts, and I hope that recognition and respect will perhaps carry over to the budgeting process next spring. It is incredibly important that we support artists in our community. Indeed, I believe that Mr. Griwkowsky asked the minister about that. He asked if perhaps increasing funding for artists and venues might be a faster way to support artists, and the minister noted that, well, this is more than just a COVID response; it's a long-term solution to a long-term challenge.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would question whether this is, in itself, a solution. I'd say that it is a step towards a solution in that this bill does not in fact have any binding power except for recognizing the requirement that government and public bodies set an example by

always entering into a contract with artists. Minister, absolutely that is a good and positive step, and I thank you for making it. Indeed, that is something I have tried to observe myself whenever I have hired musicians or artists to perform at functions within my constituency. I have paid them for that time, and I have attempted to do so at union scale. Even when I have invited artists to come and perform here for Black History Month, for those celebrations in the Legislature rotunda, I have ensured that those artists received some form of compensation for that work because, again, that is work.

That is why I will say, Minister, that certainly recognition is important because . . . [interjection] Sure. I will give way.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to intervene for a moment. I'm very interested in what you're saying right now about the nature of artists' work. One of the things I think we forget is that while it's art and we appreciate it on an artistic level, it is labour. As a result, we should be doing things in society to compensate that labour. I'm wondering if you have some thoughts about some of the things that we might do, like support of a pension plan, support of benefits, support of full-time work, you know, establishment of places and spaces for the work to occur, labour legislation that supports them, all of those kinds of things. I wonder if you just might have some thoughts about: how do we actually recognize art not just as something which we enjoy but something that we get the benefit of through the labour of others?

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you to my colleague for that question. If I may, I will finish the thought I had. I'm certainly going to come to that point about: what are some concrete steps we could take to support artists?

I will say, Minister, that it is important that we have recognition. I'm not in any way meaning to deride or diminish the value of the recognition, just placing it in context, because, as has been noted, it is too easy for us to mistake the arts for something that takes no effort to complete. We have ideas about talent and ability of individuals, and we fail to see or recognize the considerable work.

I hear people make comments like: oh, gee; you're asking that much just to play an hour of music? But the fact is that individual – it's not just that hour of music. It is the years they have spent learning that instrument, writing the songs, practising their set, buying the equipment that allows them to make that performance. The fact is that there is a good deal of investment that goes into a successful artist being able to create their work and to bring it forward, and that deserves to be recognized. And I will say that this legislation recognizes that fact.

Certainly, as my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford noted, there are many other more substantial steps that we could be considering from the position of government to support artists in that work. Artists are in a uniquely precarious position when it comes to earning a living. As has been noted, they are largely self-employed, so they do not have access, generally, to benefits. They do not have easy access to many other things that we take for granted. It can be very challenging for an artist to get a mortgage because in many cases the way they earn their income and the manner in which they are paid is not considered consistent enough by banks or other financial services.

Now, I will give credit to the Alberta Treasury Branches, which opened a specific new branch called the branch at CKUA Radio here in Edmonton. That was a program that was thought up and sort of put forward by a friend of mine, a musician, Ben Spencer. His work with the ATB brought that idea to them, and they specifically opened that branch . . . [interjection] Just one moment, Member . . .

to support artists in being able to have easier access to the types of financing from folks who understood the unique position that artists were in.

The member had a question?

Mr. Hunter: Yes, I did. Thank you, hon. member. Just one question that I have in terms of your debate is that as they are entrepreneurs and can't access, let's say, a government official or what a public-sector person would have in terms of pensions and so forth, would you, then, be advocating for all entrepreneurs, not just artists, to have that same kind of access as well?

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you to the member for that question. Certainly, I think we should have a more robust system of public supports to ensure that all individuals have access to the sorts of health care that are important. Indeed, that's why we as a party have very strongly supported things like universal pharmacare or other programs which ensure that all individuals have access to the kinds of supports they need.

Now, I'm not necessarily saying that government needs to provide those things for free but certainly finding ways that we can, particularly as we find ourselves in the position now where we are seeing more and more individuals moving into what is known as the gig economy, where we see more and more businesses off-loading what used to be direct employees that might have those opportunities and instead moving them off to be contract workers. Certainly, I would support looking at ways that we can provide better opportunities for all individuals to have those kinds of supports to improve their quality of life.

4:10

Certainly, when it comes to banking and mortgages and that sort of thing, again, I think many individuals who are entrepreneurs in other fields do have an easier time, but not all, necessarily. I would certainly encourage our financial institutions to consider that as well.

Returning to the question of artists and other supports that we can put in place, I certainly recognize the importance and the value of contracts. Now, Mr. Griwkowsky, in his conversation with the minister, also did note that the sorts of professional artists that this is aimed at are already those who, many of them, already use contracts in pretty much any transaction with a venue. That is of course going to differ, Mr. Speaker, from one type of work to another. Certainly, artists who are displaying at a gallery: my understanding is that they would generally engage in a contract to do so. Certainly, many musicians I know who have built their careers and who are in a solid position would have a contract to do so.

The challenge of course is that much of the exploitation in the arts is directed at young and aspiring artists, who are much more powerless within the system in that they are still building a career. They are looking for opportunities to break in. They are in some cases desperate for opportunities, hungry for a break, and that unfortunately is, then, where we have perhaps unscrupulous venues or individuals who are willing to try to exploit them, promising the most dreaded of all words for artists, exposure. Again, we do face a challenge in that particularly now in the digital age, where content is so readily available, so easy to duplicate, and so easy to share, it has to some extent become devalued and removed from the very real human investment in work that we know has gone into it.

It is more important than ever, indeed, that we encourage contracts, but I would also recognize that, for many artists, they are not really in a position where they have the finances or the ability or the leverage to pursue legal means to enforce that contract if it is

broken. Now, this is just in the realm of discussion. I recognize that this is a process that has gone on over the course of some time, certainly over the course of two governments . . . [interjection] Yes, my colleague.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I'm very interested in the part you're talking about now, which is really, actually a technical part of the work, aside from the art, and that is the fact that artists need to engage in contracts and therefore need some support and expertise, perhaps lawyers, legal assistants, to ensure contracts are appropriate and of course to follow up when contracts are not properly fulfilled. I'm just wondering if you have some thoughts around the types of supports that could be built around artists to, you know, help take care of the things that they're not experts in, so that they can focus on the parts that they are experts in, whatever the type of art, graphic, music, or performing that they may be engaged in.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you to my colleague for the comment and the question, and certainly I do recognize that that indeed is a challenge in and of itself. Of course, the member to the right of me here was talking about artists as entrepreneurs, and of course it's a challenge in many cases because certainly artists are not always good businesspeople, and that is not always their aspiration. Indeed, I suppose that's true in many cases. People who are good craftsmen: you could have somebody who is a very skilled electrician but does not really know how to do the books. This is a challenge that many people face. But I think within the arts industry, of course, we have to be considering: what is the role of agents or managers or other folks who can help in those cases where the artist themselves is not best equipped or interested in being equipped to take on those sorts of challenges? I bring this up simply just to add additional context.

Again, as I was saying, I appreciate the position the minister is in. Again, this is a process that has gone on over the course of consecutive governments. This began under the Minister of Culture during our government. I remember attending several sessions where artists were providing consultation on what was then being discussed as status of the artist legislation. I imagine that laid the groundwork for the minister's work on this, which I recognize was also a fulfillment of a campaign promise that was made by his party. But I do recall, from those discussions and in those situations, that it is difficult and complex to find a role where government is able to take more serious action to require or certainly to enforce contracts in these situations.

So that brings me back around, I guess, to where I was in terms of sort of saying that I recognize the value of what is being done here, and certainly I do not object to what is being done here, but I think we need to see much more from this government in terms of showing real and genuine support for the arts. For example, we had them speaking about how artists were an important piece that brought us hope – a beacon of hope, I believe, was the term – during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I can tell them this, that artists across the province, indeed many in the live-performance industry, have been exceedingly frustrated with this government in the impacts its decisions have had on that industry. I recall specifically the reopening plan that they put forward last spring, which provided very little clarity. There were very many questions, a lot of confusion, about what they were or were not allowed to do, with no small amount of frustration. Despite the fact that the minister and others have recognized the, in fact, spiritual value of what the arts contribute to us, you could sing in a church, but you could not sing at a performance venue.

There have been some very real and present challenges, and certainly in this government's approach to the pandemic, as I spoke about in my member's statement today, we had haphazard lurching

pandemic to get far worse and a lot of half-hearted measures that were introduced too late that caused much more suffering and difficulty and have prolonged this pandemic and deepened the impact it has had on artists in the province of Alberta and on the industries that are required to support them. It's clear that for an artist to have a contract is a good thing, but there has to be an industry to provide that contract to them.

So, again, I appreciate what's being brought forward in this bill. I look forward to some further discussion about the merits of it and perhaps what other pieces we may be able to consider and other views that other folks may have. I hope this can be a discussion that goes beyond us acknowledging that, yeah, we all have some artists that we like to what more concrete measures we can be taking to support them, to what more work we can be doing to ensure they continue to have the opportunity to contribute to our communities.

I can tell you that, for me, here in downtown Edmonton the arts are a major contributor to our communities. I have a number of major arts venues, I have a number of music venues of varying sizes, and we have a number of festivals and other things that provide the vibrancy that supports, then, the attraction of business. These things are part and parcel. So our support for the arts, whether through recognition or through monetary funding, has a very real impact on our economy and other parts of our community.

I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on Bill 75, Arts Professions Recognition Act, are there others? The hon. Member for Camrose has risen.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very excited that the Minister of Culture has put forward Bill 75. In fact, for those of you who have never been to the Camrose constituency, you are in for a treat because that is the centre for artists, I believe, in all of Alberta. There are so many of them that I'm so very proud of.

Let me start off with a few of the theatres that we have. The Bailey performing arts centre: that was the first vaudeville theatre in the province of Alberta, and it's been beautifully restored. If you've never been to Camrose before, that is a place you definitely need to check out. In fact, one of my members is nodding who has been to the theatre and performed there. I was very excited to have her there. They have a lot of different performances that they do there, and they like to support local artisans, local singers, and they use the venue for different things like the downtown Camrose market when it gets colder. But there are artisans of all different types in my community.

4:20

I want to talk about Sedgewick. What a beautiful community that is, great people there. They have an event called the Gathering of the Clans, and it's a Scottish festival. There you can buy all kinds of different Scottish tartans, and on that day everyone is Scottish. You can go there and they'll do a little bit of research with you and come up with a tartan that's going to look great on you, all kinds of sashes and dresses. You can buy a full suit made out of tartan. It's absolutely beautiful. It takes great talent to be able to do that sort of sewing, and I consider it a real art to be able to create that, so that's definitely something that I wanted to mention.

Another one of the groups that I'm particularly proud of in my constituency is the Tofield historic museum. Now, if you've never been there, they have the most amazing collection of birdhouses crafted out of wood. Absolutely fantastic. As soon as you walk in, they're all just hung there beautifully on the wall. I met a team of people this summer who started off the tour with that particular wall and talked about the significance of those birdhouses, because there

are so many unique birds in my constituency. There's a lot of water there. So I was excited to see that. It was a real education for me.

The other thing that I want to talk about, specifically when it comes to the Tofield historic museum, is the way that they put together and recognize different periods of time in our community and recognize different families. If you've never been there, honestly, you need to pack up the family – it's a family-friendly event – and come out there and see these beautiful displays that this team of people have put together.

There is also the Killam Chamber of Commerce. They had an event, just started doing a farmers' market this year. I drove out to support them with that. One of the families that I met have started taking cups, teacups, and putting in beeswax. Apparently, burning this type of candle is hypoallergenic, so if some people are allergic to scented candles, this is something that's going to purify the air and create something very healthy. That was a very unique piece that I have come across, and I'm very proud of the artisan that creates that.

Now, if you have never been to Hardisty in my constituency, there is a little entrepreneurial store there called Rustic Stars. She has the most amazing Christmas event happening. They start it very early, but you can get Christmas all year round in Hardisty at Rustic Stars. She has a little corner set up for I believe it's her daughter. She has started creating her own clothing line, and she's still in high school. She's absolutely amazing. So that's something that I'm definitely supportive of, the young people, developing the skill they have, these different art skills, and I think it's important that we financially support these artisans and pick up these pieces. I mean, they make lovely gifts, and it's something that everybody loves to have. It's something that's very unique in their home.

Now, I also want to talk about... [interjection] Sorry. I'll give way.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to do a quick intervention and talk about a few of the comments from the Member for Camrose and to really reiterate some of the points that the culture around Alberta is very unique. It's good to hear these perspectives about the different small towns and different things that are available. Having Christmas year round at the Rustic Stars I believe it was called: that sounds amazing. I know every time I go to Banff, for example, we're into the Christmas store there no matter what time of year it is.

I have to admit that when I went to Camrose in the past, it was actually Stage 13 and Big Valley Jamboree, but as I get older, I will probably be going out to the other venues. I thought I'd just give you an opportunity to talk about how this particular bill is going to help provide economic security and stability for these artists and help them grow, which is the important part of it, recognizing their cultural attributes. Am I out of time?

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you so much for the intervention, Member. For a lot of these artisans, the business owners in particular, this is their livelihood. This is how they support their families, so it's important for us to give recognition to that and, as I stated earlier, you know, buy their products and shop local, right? I mean, that's something that we all talk about. I think we should always continue to focus on doing that, supporting our local artisans and making sure that our friends and neighbours have a livelihood to support themselves. I think that's why, in particular, I find Bill 75 so important.

There are a few more things that I want to just highlight, and, you know, that's the floral industry. When you come to Camrose, there are some very unique floral shops, and one of them is Pedersen's Florists right on main street. It's been a company that's been around for decades. Everybody knows Pedersen's when you come to town.

You can get houseplants there, but you can get some really unique pieces.

Speaking of unique, there is an artist – I call her a flower artist. She owns a new shop, that she opened just about a year ago, called Nest, and it's the cutest little place, just off main street. I'm telling you, she is so incredibly talented. She puts together these wonderful pieces, and it really is an artwork. That's how she makes her living, creating these beautiful floral arrangements that people buy.

There's another one called Bea's Blooms, that's just across the street from my office. It's a family business. All of them are family businesses, and the kids are often in the shop. That's what I love, going into a business where, you know, it's a family atmosphere and everyone works together, and they make sure that they can sustain their business that way.

There's one more that I do have to highlight, and she's in Daysland. Some of you may have seen her advertising on Facebook. It's called Rusty Daisy. She gets hundreds and hundreds of people to comment on her posts that she does. Every time I drive through Daysland, I make sure I stop in and pick up a floral arrangement there. The one unique thing about what she does is that she'll take plants that she just finds out in the area, and then she dips them in paint, or she'll maybe just put a little sprig or maybe some glitter or something, and it just adds that unique piece of interest to that floral arrangement. I just have such respect for people who can, you know, just create something beautiful. They see it in their minds, and then they just put it together. It's absolutely gorgeous. I think it's important to recognize those people. [interjection] Yeah. I'll give way. Thank you.

Mr. Getson: Member, I hesitate to intervene, but you're striking upon a bunch of different items here. You're talking about the family businesses, the floral side of it, the attributes that rural Alberta has to offer, and some of these little treasure troves. I've got Deb's Greenhouse in my area. She's a social media magnate when it seems to come to it. She's combining art and sales with that. Some of the artists in my area as well: they appreciate the posts that we make when we travel around. You're, you know, the epitome of travelling around and doing plugs. Can you maybe expand a little bit on that and how what we do helps recognize their businesses and helps those small businesses flourish in the arts and that cross-training, if you would, of self-promotion and cross-promotion?

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you so much for the intervention, Member. I do appreciate that, and I'm very happy to go down that train of thought. You know, it's very important for me as an elected member on my personal time to make sure that I do something to support my community, and what better way to do that than to support small businesses, local businesses, mom-and-pop shops? I just want to make sure that everyone gets supported, gets some attention. Oftentimes they don't have a budget to do advertising, and I think that it's important for us to work with our chambers of commerce and different organizations and just help them get that little piece of spotlight that they need. I was very happy to do that.

Since being an elected member, I've focused first on the downtown area. You know, we had an economic downturn, and those poor folks were really hit hard, and then, because the Camrose constituency is so much more than just the city of Camrose – it's beyond – I've decided it's important for me to get around to all the towns and support all those people equally. It's been my pleasure to do that. So thank you so much, Member.

I've talked about the floral people, but I have to tell you that there is one spot that's tucked away in a little place called Holden. Some may have seen the video that I did. The lady who did the video with me, sadly, has recently passed away from cancer. What a remarkable

woman she was. But, you know, the gallery has all kinds of hand-painted pieces of artwork created by local artisans. Everything in that particular gallery is created by people just in the immediate vicinity, so it's important for me every time I drive through there to support them, to drive by and just pick up something that I can maybe pass on to somebody else or maybe give as a gift to a family member.

4:30

They have the most unique wooden sculptures. There's this one bench that I've been eyeing for a little while. It's a little bit of an expensive piece, but I've got to have it one of these days, so I'm going to make way in my home to be able to do that. But that's another style of artisan, these woodworkers. They're just amazing, how they can just create those different pieces. Then we also have Indigenous artwork in my Holden store as well. You know, it's just amazing to me, the colour that they use. It's so striking and just remarkable.

But I also want to talk about the musicians. Now, I had mentioned that one of our members had come through my community and stopped at the Bailey Theatre. You know, the downtown farmers' market in Camrose: every week they do just different artisans that come by, but they also have musicians. Mick Dingo is one artist in particular who I've listened to and really enjoyed his music. He's just a local guy who comes out, and he just performs in the area. I really want to give a shout-out to him and support him because it's people like him who have been hurt by COVID. They haven't had the opportunity to play in the venues, and they count on that revenue to pay their rent and to buy food. That's a source of income for them, so it's important for us to recognize that work.

You know what? There's one lady that was my roommate in the past, and she is an opera singer, a professional opera singer. She attended Augustana campus in Camrose. What an amazing voice she has. She finished her degree, and where did she end up going but Los Angeles. She's down in Los Angeles, and she's actually singing, a professional opera singer. That is one of the most unique roommates that I've ever had. Sometimes, you know, I would come back and say: can you just sing me a little something? And she would just perform. Hats off to people that have that talent and skill.

Mr. Speaker, you know, again I would just like to express my support for Bill 75 and thank the Minister of Culture so much for recognizing the hard work of our artists in our community regardless of what type of skill they have.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. I, of course, have been listening to all the discussion and appreciate all of the points of view. Minister, thank you for rising and talking about the importance of arts in Alberta. The Arts Professions Recognition Act is a start down the track, I believe, of the discussions that should be more fulsome. I'm taking this as a start and not a completion of activity in this regard because I take what my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre says, who as an artist, as a person who knows the music industry quite well – what he said was: you know, let's not just use this as an opportunity to talk about art and artists we enjoy; let's use this time in this place as an opportunity to talk about how we can support more the industry of artists in this province, what more government can do to recognize the value brought by artistic expression across any number of ways that that is happening.

Not only is there economic value – and I think our minister indicated that \$1.3 billion, I believe, of GDP can be attributed to artists and their production, the consuming of their product. That's

not nothing, Mr. Speaker. The GDP in 2020 for this province was somewhere around \$300 billion. Artists are doing things to contribute to that, but more can be done by them. I think we're all in agreement that their capacity is boundless, is endless in terms of the good they can bring this province.

I do agree with my colleague here on my left as well as the minister that artists, through this challenging time of a pandemic in this province, have provided all of us with some healing, with some beacon of hope, with some enjoyment, whether that's in your own home or doing things in a safe way with others through the various times of health restrictions and openings in this province. I'd like to kind of keep that in mind, that we have to be concrete in what we think government should do, could do to assist these artists.

I'll just quickly say that I personally enjoy and am a patron of music throughout the province. My spouse enjoys visual art and has put a great deal of that throughout our home in Calgary, and we both enjoy theatre together. For us, that's the kind of benefit we derive from art. Artists, I think, as my colleague said and I do see mentioned in this bill, should be paid, need to be paid at scale, and whenever I've had the opportunity to engage artists, whether it be for events that I was hosting, scale . . . [interjection] Of course, I will recognize you.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, hon. member. I'm glad that you're bringing up the challenges that artists face with actually being remunerated for the work that they do and the fact that it is work. Because of the way that the funding model is actually set up, as I was discussing in my own interjection in the House, the fact is that we still highly rely on this concept of a patron actually commissioning works of art.

Then I did cover how now NGOs are also part of that process, but of course the funding for that is still all interrelated. Although the bill actually highlights – and it's actually a good thing – that they should be paid, they should have a contract and be paid, well, the funding that they are receiving is still through the same channels, so that continues to be a problem. Even now under COVID and the fact that this government has reduced funding not only to artists but also to nonprofit organizations, the problem continues to be even worse moving forward, so we need to reimagine . . .

Member Ceci: Thank you. Just taking up on that point, I totally agree. I think the current funding opportunities, the grant opportunities that this government has put in place are inadequate.

The previous government held a number of consultations in the fall of 2017 and the summer of 2018, and what we heard through those discussions – and I'll get back to my other points in a second. The participants in those discussions favoured many things, six things. I'll just quickly read them off: educational initiatives to improve the recognition of artists' contributions; they favoured doing more about fair compensation; they favoured seeing more increased funding; that government would be involved in marketing and promotion initiatives; and that there would be improved access to training and development opportunities. What we heard was that there needs to be a lot more done, Mr. Speaker, in this realm, and regrettably I don't see those same kinds of initiatives identified in this act at this time.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk briefly about the value that artists bring to society. I've talked about the personal enjoyment of that. I've talked about the GDP that they contribute. I want to touch on something that we are all familiar with, politics. My colleague in the back row talked a little bit about the important role that a loved

artist in Chile and in South America brought to that country, and it was very moving to listen to it.

But one artist I think we all know is Corb Lund. Corb Lund has raised the spectre of coal mining on the eastern slopes far more than the opposition could probably do ever in a lifetime. It's because Corb Lund enjoys a following that we all would welcome in our own social, but his is incredible. His reach is incredible. He has talked about the need for government to get its act together for the long term, for generations of Albertans who will follow us, and he has made this issue a signature issue. He has been an artist who has stayed away for many, many years. I've been following his work, his music for a couple of decades. He has stayed away from politics. Many artists stay away from politics, but this is something he couldn't stay away from because of the importance of ensuring that our eastern slopes aren't polluted by selenium, by open-pit mining, and by the effect on the agriculture and ranch lands.

Mr. Speaker, artists hold a mirror up to society in a way that politicians or other people are unable to do. They put their spin, their ideas into the world, and sometimes they come back and they resonate like nothing, you know, that government or opposition members are able to achieve. I just wanted to make sure that we had that out on the table, about the role of artists in society as well as the many other things that we enjoy. [interjection] I'll give way.

Member Loyola: Thank you. Just a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to visit Calgary and visit with the Hispanic Arts Society there. Of course, while we were having a conversation, observing all the restrictions under COVID fully masked, we did discuss the role that arts will play in actually helping people with mental health issues as we continue to confront the pandemic and actually get out of the pandemic, that artists, as the member was saying, hold that mirror up to society, and how this is such an important issue. People are desperate for mental health supports in our society and in drawing the connections, the interrelations between the different topics. Of course, my recommendation would be that as ministries we find ways to incorporate the arts into the work of all the ministries.

Member Ceci: I'll just continue on. I agree that the ministry needs to do more, and there needs to be perhaps a lens, an artistic lens, a cultural lens, put on so many of the funding programs that this government has in place.

I just want to take a moment to talk about the venues themselves. I certainly know from experience that – for instance, the stabilize live music grant program, which was a \$2 million grant program for live music professionals and for-profit venues. The for-profit venues that I know did not say that the government help – you know, what was available they would go for, but it was very, very limited. It was a maximum of \$25,000, and only 24 venues in this province received that full amount.

Mr. Speaker, live music venues are where artists parlay their trade, and if they're not there, if they're not healthy, if there are fewer and fewer and fewer, we have an issue where the music they want to get out into the world won't be heard. Of course, many are getting creative and doing things electronically and taking the time to put out that music in those ways, but the sweet spot for musicians in particular is to get feedback from people in a live setting.

This government has underperformed in terms of being able to assist live music venues throughout this province. Only \$1.4 million was dedicated to individual microgrants for individual musicians and other live music professionals to help them prepare for a return to live performances. Mr. Speaker, \$1,500 is seven gigs if the scale is \$200 or \$200 or so. It's seven gigs, which is not going to help much for artists. I talked to some artists. When they're performing

regularly, it's 25 times a month, and that's when they can create a situation where they and their families can be sustained.

We know that artists on average in this province – and this is a little dated, 2016 census information: an artist's income is about \$29,000. Mr. Speaker, I don't know when that was something you lived on for a whole year, but I can tell you that it was probably back in 1981-82 for me. I think that if that's what artists are making to make, you know, our world better and to help us get through every day, that is inadequate. That is minor in terms of what they should be getting compensated. That's not all artists, of course; that's the average or the median individual income for artists. I am advocating that we need to do more.

Member Loyola: Thank you so much for allowing me to interject once again. I want to take this opportunity to actually do a plug for an amazing organization in Calgary. When I was there two weeks ago, meeting with the Hispanic Arts Society, I did have the opportunity to actually come across information about the BUMP Festival. Of course, before in my own interjection I was talking about how much I love murals, and the BUMP Festival has over 65. Well, they did the funding or the supports for artists, for over 65 or, I believe, 69 mural artists in Calgary. When I was there for the afternoon, I mean, I couldn't do all 69, of course – I only had time for four or five of them – but I actually walked around particular neighbourhoods looking at these amazing new murals that are being provided by artists in Calgary. I just wanted to do a plug for the BUMP Festival. Perhaps the member can talk a little bit about his interaction with that organization.

Member Ceci: You know, the Beltline . . . [A timer sounded]
Thank you.

The Speaker: No, no. That's okay. That's the conclusion of his time. You have four minutes remaining.

Member Ceci: Okay. The Beltline Neighbourhoods Association is the creator of the BUMP Festival. They have been able to garner grants from orders of government – city, province, I believe, and federal government – and local development pays a stipend into the BUMP Festival for use to create visual culture, visual murals throughout the area. It's fantastic. It's a great way that Calgary-Buffalo is given vitality as a result of the artists who are creating, and the neighbourhood association has made that their goal, to improve the visual appearance of many blank walls, many places, alleys that sometimes can get somewhat difficult looking in terms of their appearance. This helps a lot.

4:50

I just want to finalize my thoughts around this act and say that the implementation plan that's coming is something that I'm very interested in and that I think artists throughout this province will be interested in. I don't know. It doesn't feel, Mr. Minister, that it goes far enough in terms of addressing the real needs of artists in this province. There's incredible diversity and range and spheres of artists in this province, and I just wish more could have been put in this recognition act. That would give more teeth to the real needs of artists, which go beyond recognition. They go to sustainable livelihoods. They go to protecting their work. They go to partnering with government in many facets, and some of the programs that we have already seen through COVID to support artists and venues have not been significant enough to warrant that support that I think is necessary.

I think there can be more that can be done, and I believe that the what-we-heard document when we were in government under ministers Eggen and Miranda in the fall of '17 and summer of 2018

provides good guidance in terms of what is necessary. There were significant online survey responses also to support the six items, that I talked about earlier, about what we heard, and I think those would be good things to do as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time allowed to speak to this Bill 75.

The Speaker: Second reading of Bill 75 is before the Assembly. Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has the call.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon. Again I'm going to start with some qualified support for the bill, though experiencing a little déjà vu. This is the third time I've spoken since we've returned to the House, and all three times have been on bills that have been only about four pages long and have been somewhat thin gruel to be discussing although every one of them I've had some positive things to say about, so I guess that's a positive. You know, I guess I really shouldn't be complaining about the size of the bill because we all know that with bills it's not how big it is; it's what you do with it.

I think that in this particular case the government has done very little of what they could have done, as essentially I said with the previous ones as well. But, you know, really, to be respectful, I do want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward because I certainly think that we see a couple of the many things that come out of the consultation that had been done under the previous government, under Minister Miranda. A couple of the things that were addressed by artists: we see them being addressed here, so I certainly want to ensure that the minister knows that we are glad to see a first tiny step forward in this work.

We would certainly encourage the minister to add more, to respond to more of the things that came out of the consultation, some of which I think you've heard, but I'm quite sure that you have access to the full documentation from that consultation. I certainly would like you to expand, to make this a more fulsome bill. You know, it really is worth while. We do look for opportunities to support government bills when they come forward. I think we can probably find some substantial common ground between us in this area to move on, so I encourage the minister to do that.

I am concerned that the intent of this bill is so limited to just being a bill of recognition, just showing our support and essentially just putting into legislation that the government will act with respect towards artists. You know, I mean, I am a bit aghast that we have to put into a bill that the government will treat artists with respect, but essentially that is what the substantive part of this bill is about. Every line starts with respect: "respect, honour and in good faith abide by scale agreements . . . respect the working conditions of professional artists." [interjection] Sorry. You have an intervention?

Mr. Dach: If I might. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's exactly on this point of respect for artists and the professions and performing artists that I want to intervene. This government talks about having a great deal of respect for artists and the work they do to make a living in the arts, yet on the other hand they go ahead and cut funding for the very training grounds these artists develop their skills in. That is in our postsecondary institutions and, not only that, in music programs in elementary school and secondary school as well and then, even at a higher level, in such institutions as our Banff Centre for the arts. Now, if that is the type of respect that the government wishes to show to artists, I think we need to rethink respect. This bill seeks to recognize artists and the contribution they make to our society, but the respect goes a long ways to ensuring that the funding is kept for education.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for that intervention. I certainly will take some time, in a few moments, to address the various things that the government has been doing to actually take away from the contributions to the arts, but I'm worried that I have some limited time, so I actually would like to get to some of the things that I think are missing from the bill here itself. Then if I have time, I will address the issues of other government actions which are kind of undermining the intention here of this bill.

As the Member for Edmonton-McClung has just pointed out, you know, it's one thing to say that you respect people; it's another thing to actually engage in behaviours that demonstrate that you do. I certainly would like to see this government engage in some very specific behaviours that would be helpful.

I think the thing that is very important here is that we have seen that when we talk about a bill about recognition of the arts, the response from many of the members here in the House is to talk about their own personal engagement with the arts and how much they love local artists and the wonderful works they do, the shops that they have in their communities, the experience of going to see them, and so on. I think that happens a lot in the arts, and I'm glad people have these wonderful, positive experiences here. But I really would like us to see in this legislation, to step away from our own experience of the arts, and to step into the artist's experience of the arts, in that – of course, our own experience is one of delight. I mean, that's kind of the very nature of arts very often: nice local shops, wonderful images, and things that you can, you know, have a little delight with by sometimes engaging in purchasing or supporting in some other way.

What we really need the government to do is not just to say: "Gee, I love the arts. It makes me feel good. I really enjoy it. I love the people who are engaged. I like the pieces of works that I see that they perform." Yes, okay. What I'd like to see the government do is to say that this is actually a valuable contribution to the well-being of society, that this is actual labour that is performed not simply to give you, you know, a personal pleasure but actually has an important part in the structure and the positive functioning of our society. If we support it appropriately, we will actually have a better society. We will get through the difficult times because arts tend to support us. We will get through the times of ennui because artists provoke us. Art has an incredible paradoxical ability to calm us down when we need to be calmed and to agitate us when we need to be agitated. That's an incredible thing for one thing to do, to have both of those talents and abilities. [interjection] Yes.

5:00

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to ask the hon. member who was commenting on the value of arts to our society as a whole – he was seemingly getting to talk about arts as a major contributor to our social and mental health – if indeed that is a direct factor in determining the value of arts to our society. Especially in the time of a pandemic, the loss of artist performances seems to be something that people are really complaining about, and it seems to have affected mental health. In good times do the arts contribute to our mental health as a society?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for that intervention. I certainly believe that to be true. You know, we all have this sense that when we bring culture and arts and craft into our lives, the experience of living our daily lives is much enriched. Most of us spend a significant amount of time picking out pieces of art for us to engage with. Now, sometimes we don't recognize that that's what we're doing, but if you go into a clothing store and you pick out your favourite piece of clothes, you are actually responding to someone's artwork. When you go to buy a car or a vehicle and you look at the

design and the shape of that vehicle, you are responding to the artwork.

Just imagine, you know, the dystopian sort of society in which we are left with no art: the concrete walls, the everything-looks-the-same kind of society, and the complete absence of sort of vibrancy and culture and so on. That's a horrendous image. It's an image we associate with the zombie movie of the end times. We have to recognize that art isn't just sort of an extra thing that is good after you've done all the important things. It is itself an incredibly important thing that actually transforms the everyday living experience of people.

I'm saying all this because I'm trying to bring us to the point where we understand that this is not an add-on to society; this is fundamental and at the core of society. Because it is at the core of society, we should be doing things to ensure the well-being of the people that provide that service to all of us through the labour that goes into being able to arrive at that place when we get to delight in the end product, the many, many years of education, whether that be through a formal institution or through self-employment, the many years of practice and rehearsal, and the effort to get the art from the artist to the larger world in all the various ways in which that happens.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This is real work. This is real work that needs to be acknowledged. This is why I find that the bill is lacking. It doesn't acknowledge the work part of art. It acknowledges art in the sense that we want to acknowledge that we have artists and that we should respect our relationships with them, and that's good. I absolutely want to commend the minister for the pieces that are here. What I'd also like to see, though, is: where are the structures that help the self-employed artist to actually be successful enough to contribute maximally to our society? Where are the structures that ensure some kind of minimal level of income for them so that they aren't living on what we know in this province is an average income of less than \$30,000 a year for artists? We know that artists on average have precarious work, that they do not know when the next paycheque will be coming, that many times they put in great, significant amounts of effort and get very little in return because they are in the position, particularly in their early years, of having to kind of put in their dues, having to cut their teeth, and nobody is paying them for that.

A group of young people get together and put on a play and spend – I know deeply from personal experience, both myself and one of my children who has two degrees in the arts, getting together to put on a play – in the multiple thousands of hours, if you add up all of the people involved in the play, and everybody goes home with less than \$100 each because it's the nature of the work. Nobody wants to hire them in those well-paying positions until they've done many, many, many unpaid-type positions.

You know, this is a chance for us to say: you know what? We need to support you through that. How can we find some way to ensure that you have some sort of a minimum wage? How can we ensure that perhaps you have the access to things like benefit plans or pension plans? How do we ensure that your work goes from being precarious and never knowing when it is happening to at least having some stability of how often you're going to receive some money? I know there is no ultimate solution to all of this, but we can certainly outline the problem.

I really do believe in the creativity of all of us here and all of the artists in this province to actually respond to these kinds of issues, to actually look at adjusting tax codes to allow for the staggering of incomes spread over multiple years so that if you happen to sell a big piece for \$100,000 one year but you then have no income for three years after that, you can spread that \$100,000 over those multiple years, that when artists do engage in contracts – they get pieces of

work done – and they're not getting paid, we as a government are ensuring that there is a mechanism for them to get properly paid and for them to claim that money so that businesses that come and go, as many arts facilities do arrive and stay for a year or two and disappear, don't leave artists unpaid for work that has already been performed.

I think that there are a number of these kinds of things that we could actually have included in this bill, including things like providing them with support to engage in the legal aspects and the business aspects of their work, supports that help them with all of those massive costs that often come up at the very front end, long before they're actually able to produce a piece of art.

A friend of mine, Danek Mozdzinski, who some of you may know because he certainly produced a lot of art here in the city of Edmonton, including the tribute to Ukrainian immigration here, just off the front steps of the Legislature, found himself in a position where he had to rent a massive space to create those kinds of statues. I mean, he literally needs a room as big as a schoolroom or bigger in order to create statues of that size, the one we have out in front of the Legislature and the other ones that he has throughout the city of Edmonton of Mr. Chrystall up on the boulevard here, St. Theresa at St. Theresa church, and others. Many of you have seen his art, but you may not know it.

That means that he has to rent not a small space to work in his backyard or in his garage or something like that. He needs a space that's big enough to put in statues that are sometimes 15 or 20 feet tall, that require hundreds of pounds of clay. He needs to have that space available for him for sometimes in the neighbourhood of two years before the final product is sent down to Cochrane, where it is turned into a bronze. He has to live essentially in poverty for two years until that commission comes through and even then only receives a small portion of the actual money that's given. If \$100,000 is given for a statue, by the time you do all the renting of things, all the buying of physical goods to make the statue, and then the cost of transporting it down to Cochrane and turning it into a bronze, and the cost of the bronze and then returning it back, an artist may only get 4 or 5 per cent of the dollars.

5:10

Are there things that we can do, are there structures that we can build to help them to achieve a level of satisfaction and to sustain a lifestyle that isn't a lifestyle of extreme poverty in the hopes that they're the 1 in 1,000 that actually makes it, that actually, you know, reaches that place where people are tossing money in their direction like the Hollywood folks that we sometimes imagine artists to be? For every one person in Hollywood that is making a million dollars per film, there are thousands in every province in this country that are earning less than \$30,000 a year and many trying to raise families, many trying to invest in their own work so that they can continue to do what is essential to the well-being of our society, not an adjunct, not an add-on, not a good-to-have, a must-have, a society that is vibrant, that understands itself, that challenges itself, and that celebrates itself.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on second reading of Bill 75? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and a big thank you to all of my colleagues who've jumped in on this debate so far on Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act. I've heard a lot of amazing comments in support of artists, a lot of artists named, some whose work I'm going to have the chance to take a look at when I get out of the House. Certainly, the goals of Bill 75, the arts recognition

act, of promoting greater economic security, freedom of expression, and professional recognition for Alberta artists, are goals that, it sounds like from this debate, we are all in support of.

I'm very pleased to rise and be able to add my thoughts on Bill 75 because supporting and encouraging artists and the value that they provide to our province, economic, spiritual, and beneficial to mental health, to our quality of life, and to the diversity of the culture that we have in this province – artists are amazing. I've heard that through speech after speech, including people talking about regional artists as well as the arts scene in general.

Now, Bill 75, while talking about such a positive goal of supporting artists, has in its implementation a surprisingly narrow scope. One of the things I'd like to talk about in my response at second reading is maybe exploring if there is more that we could be doing as well as supporting the intent of Bill 75, if there might be ways that we can go further and do more to support Alberta's artists. I mention the narrow scope simply because, as I understand it and as I've read the bill, it appears to formally recognize artists, but it is defined within public entities when it comes to the contractual obligations. As well, it needs to apply to people who are considered professional artists. The arts community is incredibly broad and diverse, and not everyone who is a member of the arts community would be considered a professional artist. In that way, I find Bill 75's implementation to be somewhat narrow.

Now, I do want to acknowledge that, through the introduction of this legislation, the fact sheets that you find to pair with Bill 75 really highlight some of the income disparity that artists experience, the median income of artists being nearly half of the median income of Albertans. Artists with a university education: again nearly half of Albertans who have a university education are working in other fields. I certainly support and applaud the goal of the bill to increase the wages, to increase the financial support that is happening here in this province towards our artists and arts communities. But during our time in government, back in 2017-2018, our Minister of Culture at that time undertook a large series of consultations with Alberta artists to specifically explore ways we could support artists and their financial security. This was an incredibly large engagement that included round-table engagements in person, obviously difficult to do right now during a COVID time frame, but also included online consultations. A bit of a travelling around road show was held, and a lot of feedback was gathered.

Now, in reviewing Bill 75 and the websites that the government has launched, it did not tell me what consultation this government has engaged in to come up with the contents of Bill 75, and I could not find a what-we-heard document. Now, in an *Edmonton Journal* article around this bill – and I imagine as part of the press conference the minister would have spoken about this – it does say that there was an online survey that consulted with nearly 2,000 responses, so that's positive, but one of the things that I have been thinking as I have listened to debate throughout the debate on Bill 75 was that I wish we could have more of those artists' voices be included in the discussion that we are having here in this Legislature. I feel like, with my background as someone who was formerly the minister of labour, there are some really big issues when it comes to the economic security of artists and the financial support that they deserve that appears to be missing.

Specifically, working conditions and minimum standards to support artists and those who work in those industries: we have a lot of gaps when it comes to the legal and employment protections for artists in our province, and there are some jurisdictions that have taken steps towards improving that, but here in Bill 75 I'm not seeing enough that will materially improve the quality of life and the working standards for artists. This includes making sure that artists are able to have the support of the workers' compensation

system should they be injured in the performing of their duties and in working their jobs, minimum standards in benefits to ensure that they are able to access the health care that they require. A lot of artists have to pay the full cost of CPP themselves because there is no mechanism for that to be cost shared. I think most artists do not have access to pension support beyond CPP unless they are also working another job to support.

We know a lot of artists do that. A lot of artists will have a day job and then also be artists on the side. I've heard from constituents that this can often cause problems when it comes to qualifying for employment insurance, and it has a lot of challenges with their income levels varying from year to year. I believe I heard my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford starting to talk about some of those issues. There are some serious gaps in our labour relations regime for self-employed artists and producers as well as other precarious workers. I heard earlier, when my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre was speaking, the issue raised about: well, what about other entrepreneurs who might be missing these things?

It is a bigger issue than just artists, but I think it's particularly acute for artists, particularly when we consider that our arts community tends to be about 60 per cent female. Here in Alberta that's actually higher than the national average, so we're talking about a group of people that is mostly women. Knowing that they are under – yeah, I would say underpaid. Their median incomes are half of that of average Albertans. Knowing that there are huge legal and employment protection gaps that exist for artists and having some serious questions about the consultation that was done and the opportunity that Bill 75 presents for us to do more and to provide more support beyond the narrow scope of this bill, which focuses on professional artists and public entities, I would like to contribute to the debate by introducing an amendment.

5:20

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment REF1. Please proceed.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. For REF1 I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 75, Arts Professions Recognition Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 75, Arts Professions Recognition Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Now, I want to be very clear. I started speaking of my support of the goals of this bill to support and encourage artists, speaking of my support of this bill and its stated goals to make sure that we are promoting greater economic security, freedom of expression, and professional recognition for Alberta's artists. What I would like to do with this amendment, Madam Speaker, is allow us to bring the voices of artists into this conversation and to delve more deeply into the consultation that went into Bill 75, what we may have heard from Alberta's artists and what more we can do for their economic security and support so that Alberta can have a thriving arts community that feels supported.

COVID-19 has been incredibly hard on our arts community, and I've heard a number of speakers speak to this, the impact of venues and events being shut down. Performing arts in particular have been really struggling and looking for more and more support, and I think that may have changed the needs of arts communities when we are thinking about what we need to do going into the future. I know I certainly missed being able to go to venues to hear live music, to see performances. Being able to do some of that outdoors scratched that itch a little bit, but now that we are hopefully moving through an

improved state with our restriction exemption program, otherwise known as vaccine passport, getting into a situation of being able to allow people back into those venues when we know everyone is vaccinated and can safely enjoy live arts performances – I think now is a great time to have a deeper conversation about how we can be supporting the arts community and exactly what will make a true difference.

Again, as former minister of labour the fact that artists not only get less financial recognition than they deserve and in so many ways also experience higher occupational health and safety risks without the benefit of workers' compensation coverage in many cases: that is a huge concern for me, and it's something that Bill 75 is essentially silent on. I would be very interested in, at a committee, having a further discussion about what we could be doing to support artists. If through this debate and through the work at the committee more information about the consultation process and how the elements of this bill were prioritized over other potential decisions could be had, I think that would really add to the debate and the discussion. I'd like to see Bill 75 become something that all Albertans can point to to show that our Alberta arts community is supported like none other.

Now, I note that Bill 75 has been modelled after similar legislation passed in other jurisdictions, and when I saw the list of other jurisdictions with similar legislation, it appears Alberta is one of the last in Canada to bring this forward, so I think that makes it really important that we get this right and work together to pass the best possible implementation of this type of legislation that will support Albertans.

I would at committee also like to find out more about why this bill right now chooses only to provide contractual obligations for public entities, because the Saskatchewan bill that this is modelled after does require contracts for anyone who engages with artists, and that would actually provide more protections for the artists who are hired throughout the province, whether it was a government entity or even just a large-scale music festival or a local bar. The decision there is one that I would love the opportunity to speak with artists about and to find out more, if there might be a way that we can, through amendments to Bill 75 at committee, have those constructive conversations. We would not amend at committee, Madam Speaker, to be clear, but we would discuss amendments and then bring them back here to pass them so that we have a wonderful bill. I think that would be very helpful to the citizens of Alberta and to the artists that live and work here.

Secondly, the definition of “professional artist” is incredibly important because it's to the professional artist that this bill applies. How the minister chose the parameters and who might be left out when we talk about the definition of professional artist, I think, is incredibly important. I have seen through, I would say, primarily social media, in taking a look at what's happening in the world around me – particularly during the pandemic, when so many people had to stay home, I think our arts community has grown, with a lot of people turning to arts during the pandemic for self-expression, to improve their own mental health.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members wishing to speak to amendment REF1? The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a little bit shocked to see this amendment come forward. We hear lots of positive comments from the members opposite. This stuns me, quite frankly. It's a delay tactic. There has been all kinds of consultation with all the industry associations, with a number of the big venues, and as was noted, almost 2,000 individual artists consulted on this. You know, the NDP had four years in which they could have brought forward legislation

like this. They did nothing. I really begin to wonder, with a motion like this of delay and putting this off, if they actually really do even support artists or if it's all just noise.

Quite frankly, I will address some of the detailed questions that were raised later at the appropriate opportunity, but I urge all members to vote against this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers wishing to join the debate on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm a little disappointed to hear the reaction of the Minister of Culture to the referral amendment that was just brought forward because it certainly was not brought forward in a negative way. The spirit of the amendment was, in a way, to commend the Minister of Culture on his efforts in bringing forward the Arts Professions Recognition Act and in an effort to, at a time when the arts are definitely on the minds of the public and are in the spotlight of public attention, go a mile further on the recognition of artists. I think that if indeed the people were listening carefully to the remarks of successive speakers on this side of the House from the NDP opposition, our efforts leading up to the introduction of this referral were to show that this bill, which is great now as a solo act, could be so much more. We want to turn it into more of an orchestra than it is right now, and we would do this by bringing forward the ability of Albertans to come together and make representations to a committee that we propose by making this referral amendment.

Indeed, the minister shouldn't take offence to the referral. We certainly recognize the value of the bill that's been put forward by the Minister of Culture, but we have been of the mind, as I think we've exercised through our debate this afternoon and tried to demonstrate to the House, that it really is a piece of legislation that is timely, and it should take advantage of this spotlight that the public has now on the arts because so much of the pandemic has been, you know, without the arts. That loss has been felt and recognized by the public, and the recognition of the value of arts is top of mind, I think, for all Albertans.

5:30

The opportunity should be taken by this Legislature, this Minister of Culture to sharpen that focus when it is so little the focus of the public in Alberta. We take our artists for granted. This opportunity to build upon a framework that the minister has in his somewhat small bill, the Arts Professions Recognition Act, shouldn't be missed.

I know that during this time of pandemic, when people are missing the arts and we have many venues potentially going down to defeat financially, many reached out to me and asked about the lack of supports or whether there were going to be supports. Some of the supports that were extended, whether they were federal or provincial, helped venues to survive. Now, of course, we are hoping that they will be able to open their doors to full crowds at some point, but it was a very, very wide and rude awakening to many Albertans. They finally got to realize that a profession in the arts is a precarious one.

I have an individual that I went to high school with who is a fairly well-known artist in this city and throughout the province. He's been a professional entertainer and musician and singer in Edmonton in particular, but he's well known throughout the province. His name is Darrell Barr. I went to high school with him, and Darrell started, he says, 30 years ago as an entertainer, but I think he's trying to be kind to himself. I went to high school with him, so he's probably – he was

singing and playing guitar in the 1970s, so it's a little more than 30 years, Darrell. He's had appearances on *The Tommy Hunter Show*. He's been with guests Brooks & Dunn, Patty Loveless, Tom T. Hall, George Hamilton IV, appeared on Nashville, now TNN network. He's had some really strong career pieces to his credit, and Darrell is still rooted in the entertainment industry here in the Edmonton area. He used to have an open stage that he hosted at a small venue in St. Albert every Thursday night. Now it's actually at the roadhouse on Yellowhead Trail. This is the type of individual that we seek to protect.

Not everybody is a Darrell Barr, who through thick and thin struggled and became a well-known performer and is now helping others up, lifting them up because of his open-stage nights, that he does to support younger artists. This is something which is a rarity, where you have an individual who through their own gumption managed to survive. Through really tough times such as the pandemic they were doing things such as performing in people's front yards or on their back decks just to get a little bit of revenue.

It's individuals like this, Madam Speaker, who I think we should be hearing from at committee when it is referred, should this referral amendment be passed. I'd love to hear the comments of a more-than-30-year performer locally in Alberta who started with nothing and is going strong now, 30 years later, and see what he would have to say about how much more this bill could be, this Arts Professions Recognition Act, and what more than just simple recognition it could actually be comprised of. Could there be things such as the labour improvements that were being suggested by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods in her introduction of the referral? There are individuals who managed to survive, that I've known from my youth, in the performing arts as well who are now giving back. They also are people that I would like to hear from in committee.

I had an individual who was a high school mate of mine who was our class historian in grade 12 at Queen Elizabeth high in Edmonton. I was the valedictorian, and we both went out to our grad together. She became an actress, and she wanted to be an actor for all of her career. She started off just after high school in a caravan, a horse-drawn caravan going through rural British Columbia, going to small towns and performing as an actor. To make a long story short, Corrine Koslo has now been acting on CBC on the *Corner Gas* show doing voice-overs for the one actor, a character, who has passed away, so working with Lorne Cardinal and the cast of *Corner Gas*. She's come a long, long way, and that is the individual type of performing artist that I'd like to hear from, that I think we have a lot to learn from to make this bill better.

I don't know if the venues that were used to have consultations beforehand were those that invited the in-depth type of conversations I'd like to have with people like Darrell Barr and Corrine Koslo to bring forward the deeply rooted Alberta stories that they have in the arts in this province. I hope to have the opportunity to have people like Darrell and Corrine come before committee so that we can hear their stories and hear their recommendations to do more than simply appreciate the artists, to do some really significant things that guarantee their incomes.

For example, the government brought in legislation that would, with respect to tradespeople, guarantee a timely payment. Well, you know, performing artists have similar troubles when they're trying to realize on their contracts. Getting stiffed as a musician or an actor is not an uncommon thing, so to be able to realize on your contracts, have some protections, some legal strength and force, might be something that this bill could entertain if we heard from artists on referral in committee about some of the experiences they've had and what mechanisms might help them to ensure that their payments actually get made. Maybe there's a trust situation. I'm not

sure, but I'd like to hear from those artists in committee about securing their revenue stream for them.

Other things that I'd like to hear about are the training grounds for our musicians. People by and large are not child prodigies. It takes hard, hard work to train either as a performing artist or as a sculptor or no matter what. Whether it's visual or performing or fine arts, it takes years and years of work. I certainly come from a family where there was music in the house, but it wasn't coming from me. My sister actually started at a very early age to learn piano, and she became a music teacher for 37 years within the public school system. I grew up listening to *Lara's Theme* as my wake-up music. That was something that she had as a skill.

I didn't, but I recognized in my university career, where I ended up having to take a music course as a part of the program – and I took a music translation course. It was where you had to transpose music up an octave. It was difficult. Music was difficult for me, and I remember that Professor Lincoln at the U of A music department spent hours and hours with me. I can remember the moment the light went on, and I could transpose music up an octave. I got it because of his persistence. It's these instructors who spend time with the students in their earlier careers who allow them to reach a level of performance that they can actually turn into a career.

Unfortunately, what we've done is we've significantly cut postsecondary educational funding. We've cut things like the Banff Centre for the arts, which is a world-renowned centre for gathering artists of every description. That institution is suffering badly right now.

5:40

Even in the lower grades, in elementary schools, it used to be common for instruments to be supplied, and now, of course, there are funding requirements on the part of students to gather instruments so that they can continue with their music programs. They're sort of the first thing to go in an elementary school system. That whole graduation process from elementary school up to postsecondary training is under funding threat. Those are the kinds of things that we can hear about in committee from those that would attend from the artistic community, including current students right now, Madam Speaker.

I hope once again that the Minister of Culture, who brought forward this Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act, sees our referral amendment in the light in which it was proposed. It was through a spirit of co-operation and hoping to build on the framework that he's brought forward in this proposed bill. Certainly, no slight intended in any way whatsoever.

I know that all of us have got somebody in the family or close to us who they can tell stories about who is now currently in the artistic profession, whether as a performer or sculptor or a painter, and we marvel at what they've done to get there. You know, you may think our job is a little bit odd; being a musician or a sculptor or a painter and trying to do that full-time is probably difficult even to imagine. But you've got to financially survive, and to make that happen, there are a lot of difficulties and hurdles that people who are in that profession have to overcome.

There's an opportunity, as I said, Madam Speaker, right now. When the focus is on the arts, as it has not been for any time that I can remember, and people are gathering significant knowledge about what it takes for an artist to be able to survive financially because they've had in their communities – for example, in the Westridge community during a stage of the pandemic this summer there was an artist, a local artist, who did perform on the lawn of one of the homeowners in the neighbourhood, and people brought their lawn chairs to sit and listen.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton–City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment from my colleague from Edmonton–Mill Woods, recommending that this bill be brought to committee. In discussing this amendment, I want to be absolutely clear that supporting this amendment and taking the opportunity for further discussion does not, as was suggested by the Minister of Culture, suggest in any way that there is a lack of support for artists. Indeed, I am quite comfortable, Madam Speaker, with the position that I hold and indeed that artists in my constituency, in this city, and across the province of Alberta know they have my support and that I and my colleagues have regularly demonstrated that. Indeed, supporting this amendment, moving this to committee, in no way suggests a lack of support for artists.

Indeed, I am quite comfortable in saying that if these members of this government can repeatedly stand and say that they support health care workers after everything their government has done to attack them, tried to roll back their wages, the punishment they have heaped on them with their utter mishandling of this pandemic, I can support this committee and quite comfortably say that I still support artists and be able to say that with a good deal more truth.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about some of the reasons why we might want to take this forward to consider at committee, to delve into this further. Now, again, we do not have much from this minister currently demonstrating, in fact, what he heard specifically from artists. As has been noted, we don't have a what-we-heard document. We don't have anything published from those discussions. I'm not aware of any artists, indeed, in the community here in Edmonton that were necessarily even aware of that process.

Certainly, I think if we had the opportunity to view those documents or to bring in some of those folks to have the opportunity here for them at committee – and, indeed, I recognize that probably, I would think, a significant amount of this consultation took place under the previous Minister of Culture, before this minister was appointed. Certainly, I want to thank her for her work in that. I do recognize that though we may disagree on many issues from time to time, she certainly demonstrated her very real passion and support for the arts, herself having that experience and having worked as an artist in this province and continuing to do so.

I think having the opportunity to delve deeper into that consultation process, to be able to learn and understand more of what was discussed and went forward there, and to bring more people forward to discuss – I would note that in my previous remarks I acknowledged that there may be challenges about what could be brought forward in terms of the legislation, in terms of actually requiring contracts. You know, I had the opportunity to do some further research and reading while we've been listening to the other members in the House, and I do note that in Saskatchewan's Arts Professions Act, which was enacted in 2010, so 11 years ago, it does in fact, as my colleague from Edmonton–Mill Woods noted, require that anybody hiring an artist, a professional artist in the province of Saskatchewan, sign a contract. We are well short of that provision here.

Now, we haven't heard an indication from the minister so far about why he may feel that that was not possible in the province of Alberta. Is it a logistical challenge? Is it a legal challenge? Is it something where he feels simply that the venue owners or others who are engaging artists would not be willing to bear that? I think if we were to take this to committee, we would have an opportunity for further discussion. We could certainly bring in some legal counsel to provide us with some further context on this as to why Alberta is stopping this far short. I think it would be far more helpful to artists, certainly it would show artists more support if we were to

ensure that every artist in every engagement had the protection of a legal contract.

I would also note that the Saskatchewan legislation goes even further. It lays out the specific elements that must be included in those contracts, so it goes further to protect artists, further to ensure that they are supported. It requires things such as the legal names of the engager and the professional artist, the effective date of the contract, the work that forms the object of the contract, the financial considerations involved, the frequency in which they're required to report, et cetera. Now, again, we have discussed this, and we have talked about the fact that for many artists their job is to create art. They are not legal experts. They are not folks who have the knowledge necessarily or the time to be able to sit down and work these things through, so certainly having those provisions enshrined in law could be very helpful.

I would also note, then, that the government of Saskatchewan has worked with CARFAC to actually go forward and provide templates and other educational materials for artists to ensure that they have easy-to-access tools to back up the more robust legislation that's been put in place in the province of Saskatchewan. If this were to be taken to committee, I think we'd have the opportunity to delve a bit deeper into why the minister felt those steps were not necessary or were not worthy or perhaps that artists were not worthy of that level of support in the province of Alberta.

My colleagues have noted that there are, in fact, other things that we can explore, that there are steps other jurisdictions have taken to provide further supports for artists. We've heard some discussion around labour relations regime, and one of the things that did occur to me, that could perhaps be delved into and discussed at a committee – and certainly we could hear from artists; we could also hear from folks in the field – is the question of workers' compensation.

5:50

Now, I recall that during my time when I was studying music at MacEwan University, back in the dusty realms of time, 1994 – of course, I was in school, I was a musician, I did not have a lot of money, so at that time I was biking back and forth to school. In the winter, as I was biking, I hit a patch of ice, my bike skidded, and I went over the handlebars and landed flat on my forearms. This was during the first semester of my second year when my studies were getting intense, and I began to develop difficulties with playing piano. At first it was assessed as being carpal tunnel syndrome. That, Madam Speaker, is death to a musician. That has ended many careers, and I was deeply concerned. Now, I ended up being very fortunate in that later I was recommended to a physiotherapist. When they checked it out, it turns out I had simply dislocated some of the small bones in each wrist. So having those popped back in and with a few weeks of therapy, I was able to continue, and I was able to finish out that school year. But for many, many artists, they can face very real physical challenges that could end their career.

Now, I do note that in jurisdictions at various levels there is personal coverage available under provincial WCB. I do not know if an artist in their work would be considered eligible. I took a look on the website. They do not publish all the eligible criteria. You have to call in and get that. Again, that would be an area that we could explore.

Now, certainly, you know, to speak to some of the concerns that have been raised by government members, again, no, I am not saying that artists should necessarily have anything above what others can access. But indeed to ensure that they have the opportunity to access programs that are currently available, certainly to pay into those programs, whether that's self-employment EI or whether that's provincial programs such as WCB or Alberta Blue Cross or others, to ensure that they can afford and access those programs to be able to provide that coverage for themselves as self-employed individuals in an artistic

field: those, again, are elements that we'd have the opportunity to discuss at committee and indeed hear from artists themselves and the individuals involved as to what they are looking for.

Again, I recognize that the minister certainly did undergo some level of consultation, but we have seen on multiple occasions what consultation with this government means, as evidenced in the educational curriculum, which almost no school in the province was willing to pilot but which the Minister of Education will swear up and down that she robustly consulted on. In this case I have no doubt that the minister indeed spoke with – well, he spoke with the organizations, at least. He heard from some folks through the online consultation process. Again, we have seen previously how this government sets up online consultations, often set up in such a way to work very hard to get the answers they want to hear as opposed to actually hearing from the public.

So I think that that would be a good opportunity for members to sit down and hear directly from artists, directly from, perhaps, some of these other organizations to get some better perspective on what this minister has chosen to include in this bill, which is, as we have discussed, a small amount and certainly less than other jurisdictions have moved forward with in very similar pieces of legislation, indeed the pieces of legislation which this minister has said he has patterned his bill after. We would have the opportunity to delve into this a bit deeper.

My colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford spoke of something that I know I have heard from artists and others in the field before, staggered earnings and recognizing that it can be very unique for artists in the field. Artists can spend an extremely long time working on a single piece. I had the opportunity to meet a local artist, Helis Podnek, who is a very talented designer and illustrator who happens to live here in my constituency, and she invited me to an exhibition of her work this summer. It was surprising to me to talk with her and find out that some of those pieces she had there for sale – and let's be clear that she was not selling her work for incredibly high amounts compared to what some art may go for, but there were pieces there that she had spent years crafting. When they do realize a payment – and sometimes that can be a sizable payment – for a piece that they have worked on for years and then move on to work on the next piece, which may take an extended period of time, that is reasonable, then, to look at: are there ways we can help them split that income to average it out over the period as opposed to them getting a large tax bill one year and having no income the next?

Again, these are opportunities that we would have at committee for discussion to delve into some of these areas and indeed to hear from individuals what they may have brought forward to the minister that may not be reflected here in this bill or that simply did not have the opportunity to be considered due to the context of how that consultation was set up or how it was designed.

Indeed, I think it would be helpful and enlightening for us to understand from those artists, as part of this discussion, what the realities are for artists in their earnings in the province of Alberta because, as others have observed, we have had some very good conversation today about how much we appreciate Alberta artists. That is a valid thing, and certainly there are times to stand in this place and recognize the contributions of Albertans. But I have not heard much from folks who have really talked about the actual, lived reality of folks who are creating art and the challenges they face and the unique industry that they find themselves in.

I think if we are going to be moving forward as legislators and if indeed we are serious in our intent in showing support for artists, not simply in saying that we like what you do but in truly saying that we appreciate what you do, we see the contributions it makes,

and we want to take real, concrete action to ensure that you are able to continue that work, then we need to understand the realities of how that work is created and hear from the individuals who are involved as to what it takes.

Now, I have on many occasions . . . [interjection] No, I will not take an intervention at this time. I have often been accused by members of this place of not understanding oil and gas workers or other folks in other fields in the province of Alberta, so I think it is only fair and good that we ensure that we understand all individuals on whom we wish to legislate – indeed, that support goes beyond simply the wearing of T-shirts or the putting of signs in windows, whether that be here at the Legislature or in other places – that we

go beyond sloganeering, and we dig into actual policy and the realities of impacts.

We recognize that there are many nuances that are involved in the production of the arts and the contributions that the arts make to the economy here in the province of Alberta and the role that they play. Those would be details we would have the opportunity to deal with in committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House will now stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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