



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, October 28, 2021

Day 120

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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

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

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)  
Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Hon. Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UC)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UC)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UC)  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, QC, Calgary-Acadia (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UC)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UC)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, Calgary-North (UC)  
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 20

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk		Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
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Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	

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Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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Tanya Fir	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Nate Horner	Associate Minister of Rural Economic Development
Whitney Issik	Associate Minister of Status of Women
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Minister of Community and Social Services
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Ric McIver	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Ronald Orr	Minister of Culture
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Transportation
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

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

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

Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Allard  
Eggen  
Gray  
Hunter  
Phillips  
Rehn  
Singh

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

Chair: Mr. Neudorf  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Frey (formerly Glasgo)  
Irwin  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Sweet  
van Dijken  
Walker

### **Select Special Child and Youth Advocate Search Committee**

Chair: Mr. Schow  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Jones

Goehring  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sabir  
Smith  
Turton

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

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Frey (formerly Glasgo)  
Gotfried  
Hunter  
Loewen  
Pancholi  
Reid  
Sabir  
Smith

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

Chair: Mr. Rutherford  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Milliken

Allard  
Ceci  
Long  
Loyola  
Rosin  
Shepherd  
Smith  
Sweet  
van Dijken

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

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

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

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

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

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

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

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

Aheer  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deol  
Ganley  
Gotfried  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Renaud  
Stephan  
Williams

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

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Reid

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

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

Chair: Mr. Sigurdson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rutherford

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

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

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach  
Feehan  
Ganley  
Getson  
Guthrie  
Lovely  
Rehn  
Singh  
Turton  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, October 28, 2021

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning, everyone. Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. So may Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Motions

##### Time Allocation on Government Motion 100

102. Mrs. Sawhney moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:  
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 100 is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the motion, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm glad that this motion is debatable because I want to put strongly on the record that I oppose the time allocation that is being applied. We've had 27 minutes of debate, in which time the Official Opposition has already introduced an amendment, that I think is worthy of discussion. The COVID-19 disaster and what has been happening in our province deserves a full, transparent debate. Our Official Opposition caucus, to that end, put forward the idea of an all-party committee, which this government is resisting and is instead offering this COVID debate as an alternative.

Now, I'd like to really emphasize that we have had COVID debates here in this Chamber. We have been able to ask questions in the past. Albertans are demanding more. They would like the opportunity to be able to have real experts come and talk to Albertans about what the situation is, to be able to have documents and testimony. The COVID debate that takes place in this Chamber does not do that. In fact, we've seen partisan rhetoric used to answer deadly serious questions when we've had the COVID debates in the past.

So far under Motion 100 we have had the opportunity to put forward one speaker, who introduced an important amendment. The government took four minutes to respond to that, adjourned debate, and now they're putting time allocation in, unwilling to have an honest conversation about COVID-19, the government's response, the decisions that have been made, the evidence that has gone into those decisions. This is extremely serious and concerning, and I know that Albertans are disappointed. We see that through letters to the editor, letters to constituency offices, media coverage, online discussion in every possible forum. Albertans of wildly different views are united on the fact that this government's response should have been better and that the lack of information and transparency is leading to a deficit in trust. That's what Motion 100 is allowing us to discuss and to debate.

Now Motion 100 will be time allocated after, again, only 27 minutes of debate. I on behalf of the Official Opposition am glad that I have the opportunity to object to Motion 102 being used. We have too often seen this government use time allocation to limit, to stifle, and to control debate in this Chamber. That they are doing that again on a topic as serious as COVID-19 is extremely concerning. I will be voting against Motion 102, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in voting against this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 102 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:04 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Luan	Schow
Allard	Madu	Shandro
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Nixon, Jeremy	Sigurdson, R.J.
Ellis	Orr	Smith
Glubish	Panda	Stephan
Guthrie	Reid	Turton
Hanson	Rowswell	Walker
LaGrange	Rutherford	Yao
Lovely	Sawhney	

9:20

Against the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Phillips
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Feehan		

Totals: For – 26 Against – 7

[Government Motion 102 carried]

### Legislative Assembly Debate on COVID-19

100. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

- A. Be it resolved that despite any standing order and given the urgent public importance of the COVID-19 pandemic the Assembly debate the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to all relevant matters arising since the Assembly's most recent debate on this matter on May 27, 2020;
- B. And be it further resolved that the Assembly debate the matter referred to in part A commencing on a date set by the Government House Leader in consultation with the Official Opposition House Leader that is no later than November 4, 2021, of which the Government House Leader must provide notice to the Assembly under Notices of Motions during the daily Routine on the day immediately preceding that date.
- C. And be it further resolved that the Assembly debate the matter referred to in part A as follows:
  - (a) the Premier may make the first statement not exceeding 30 minutes;
  - (b) immediately following the Premier's statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition may make a statement not exceeding 15 minutes;
  - (c) immediately following the Leader of the Official Opposition's statement and for a period not exceeding 30 minutes
    - (i) the Leader of the Official Opposition may ask questions on matters relevant to the Premier's

- statement or the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
- (ii) the Premier or any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
- (d) immediately following the question and response period referred to in clause (c), the Minister of Health may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
  - (e) immediately following the Minister of Health's statement and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes
    - (i) members who are not a member of Executive Council may ask questions on matters relevant to the statement or the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
    - (ii) any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
  - (f) any member of Executive Council may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
  - (g) immediately following each statement made by a member of Executive Council and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes
    - (i) any member who is not a member of Executive Council may ask questions on matters relevant to the statement or the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
    - (ii) any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions;
  - (h) a member who asks a question or a member of Executive Council who responds in accordance with clause (c), (e), or (g) is limited to a period of two minutes at one time to ask that question or make a response;
  - (i) immediately after all statements and related periods for questions and responses have concluded, the debate is considered to have been concluded by the Assembly without decision.
- D. And be it further resolved, for greater clarity, the debate may be adjourned at any time.

Mr. Dang moved that the motion be amended in part C as follows:

- (a) in clause (d) by striking out "may" and substituting "must";
- (b) in clause (e) by striking out "15 minutes" and substituting "50 minutes";
- (c) in clause (f) by striking out "any member of Executive Council may" and substituting "each member of Executive Council, other than the Premier and Minister of Health, must"; and
- (d) in clause (g) by striking out "15 minutes" and substituting "50 minutes".

[Adjourned debate on the amendment October 25: Mr. Schow]

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

**Mr. Schow:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise and speak on Government Motion 100, moved by the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and Government House Leader. I think it's certainly an important motion because it's a response to requests that I think have been raised by members of the opposition, and I think it is a prudent response given the nature of the public health crisis that we currently face.

I have heard a number of times – and I know that we are currently on the amendment, so I will speak briefly to the amendment as well in my remarks. I do understand that there is always a need for transparency and accountability in government. I was a staffer in

opposition, as many of the members in this Chamber were members at the time, and we asked for the same thing from the then government, and it is certainly appropriate for them to ask the same thing of us, especially given the nature of the health crisis we face. That is why, Madam Speaker, I think it's important that we have this discussion.

But there is a concern about the nature of how this is proposed to take place and the differences of opinion from members opposite versus those on this side. If I understand correctly – and I'm certain to be corrected at some point or at least attempted to be corrected – I will say from the outset that this speech is eligible for interventions, but I will not be accepting any at the moment. That could change if I decide to, but at the moment I won't be accepting interventions.

What I'm getting at here is that the opposition has asked us to set up a select special committee to investigate or to look at, rather, the response to the fourth wave of the pandemic and, I guess, the pandemic response in general. I can understand the reason why they want to go that route, but the reality is this, Madam Speaker. The last time I checked, we still had more than 800 people in hospital and over a hundred people occupying ICU beds. We are certainly still in a difficult place in Alberta's health care system, and to do a fulsome, in-depth dive in the committee setting, that the members opposite had asked for, I suspect we would need to bring in people from AHS and other health officials to report on their responses to this, amongst other things.

I do not think it would be appropriate at this time to ask front-line workers and other members of AHS, who are doing their best – and I applaud them for doing their best – to address the health care crisis. While I can understand the request from members opposite, I do not agree with it, which brings me to Government Motion 100, which provides an opportunity for members in this Chamber to ask questions of members of Executive Council as it pertains to a response to COVID-19 and the fourth wave and the delta variant. It includes, as it says here in part C:

And be it further resolved that the Assembly debate the matter referred to in part A as follows:

- (a) the Premier may make the first statement not exceeding 30 minutes;
- (b) immediately following the Premier's statement, the Leader of the Official Opposition may make a statement not exceeding 15 minutes;
- (c) immediately following the Leader of the Official Opposition's statement and for a period not exceeding 30 minutes
  - (i) the Leader of the Official Opposition may ask questions on matters relevant to the Premier's statement or the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and
  - (ii) the Premier or any member of Executive Council may respond to those questions.
- (d) immediately following the question and response period referred to in clause (c), the Minister of Health may make a statement not exceeding 10 minutes;
- (e) immediately following the Minister of Health's statement and for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

I believe that the spirit of the motion is to ensure that members opposite have the opportunity to hear from relevant ministers engaged in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and also ask them questions pertaining to their files. However, if I look at the notice of amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South – I hope I got that correct – it says: that member's name "to move that Government Motion 100 be amended in part C as follows," by striking out "may" and substituting "must." If we pull that up here, it says that the Health minister must report. I can see why that's a request that they would make, and it sounds legitimate

to me. The Health minister is certainly involved in this process. Striking out in clause (e): 15 minutes moving to 50 minutes.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. We may very well experience other waves, and I pray on a nightly basis and in the mornings that we do not ever see a wave as severe as the one we currently have. But with that said, I don't believe we can get all the answers that we're looking for because I don't believe we're done. We're on the way down, and I pray that we don't see another spike, but we are not done with this. Because of that, I don't think that we're able to get all the answers that we'd like.

So going on for 50 minutes: while it may seem like it is an appropriate thing to be doing at this time, we also have other business in this Chamber we have to attend to. There are the needs of this province that go beyond just COVID-19. Members opposite want to talk about it ad nauseam, and I can understand that desire. But just like when those members opposite were in government, they did what they felt was best for the province, and on this side of the House we'll do the exact same.

Moving forward, going back to the amendment: in clause (f) by striking out "any member of Executive Council..." and substituting "each member of Executive Council other than the Premier and Minister of Health..." Excluding those two ministers, there are over 20 members of Executive Council – there would be 24 excluding those two if my count is correct – and they're asking for 50 minutes from each of those ministers for question time. With just back-of-the-napkin math, we're looking at 20 hours, Madam Speaker.

Now, I suspect that not each minister of Executive Council would necessarily be asked 50 minutes of questions in their response because not all ministries are as integrally involved in responding to COVID-19 as others, but it does follow logically that the NDP has in other instances shown an interest in ragging the puck, if I could use a hockey term – a sport I've never really played but take great interest in – and I just don't see how we can commit 20 hours of this Legislature's time to asking members of Executive Council.

Now, I also believe that in the spirit of this motion the relevant members will be giving remarks on this and will be made available to answer questions. Madam Speaker, as I have said before in my remarks, there is other business to attend to in this Chamber. I think a report is prudent and is certainly timely. I do not believe that it should be occupying all the time of this Chamber because if we look around, we have 87 members who are here to address the greatest concerns of the province, and right now COVID-19 is absolutely one of them. But we also have an opportunity to create legislation, create laws that make and continue to keep Alberta as one of the most prosperous and attractive jurisdictions in the entire country to which people want to move. And if we don't address those concerns and create an environment for investment and prosperity, I think that we will have failed in our responsibilities as legislators. I don't want to take up a ton of time. I know the opposition is going to want to speak on this as well on the amendment and, ultimately, I suspect, the main motion.

9:30

I will not be supporting this amendment because I don't believe that it actually addresses the primary concerns here, and I do believe that the main motion, Motion 100, moved by the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks, gives ample opportunity for the opposition to ask the government the relevant questions they have, the pressing issues on the minds of their constituents, which is their job and they fulfill honorably. I'm certainly excited for this robust debate, but I do not believe that it needs to take 20 hours, Madam Speaker.

With that, I encourage members of the Legislature not to support the amendment, to support the main motion, and let us answer questions that are relevant and pressing to the members of the opposition and all Albertans regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll just begin by noting that given the government decision for time allocation on this debate, I will not be accepting any interventions.

Considering the amendment in front of us, this amendment is here to expand and allow for a far more robust debate and discussion here in this Assembly given that this government has decided that they do not want to have the actual scrutiny, the real transparency of sitting in front of an all-party committee, hearing from experts and having the opportunity to truly put on the record information which they continue to choose to hide from Albertans about their absolutely disastrous handling of this pandemic, the devastating impact indeed of their incompetence in handling this, in particular, fourth wave.

To provide some context for why I believe we need this amendment if we are going to get anywhere close to what Albertans deserve to see from this government, we are here today – we have had this devastating impact. I would note that it has been observed just today or just yesterday by Mr. Robson Fletcher, who's been for the CBC monitoring the COVID pandemic throughout, that October so far is the fourth deadliest month of the pandemic in Alberta, could end up surpassing September as the third deadliest. We arrived here after vaccinations were available in the province.

We are here today because of this government's decision to on July 1 lift all public health restrictions based on data that was based on the review of a single jurisdiction, the U.K., looking at what they could find as the most optimistic possibility, ignoring data from south of the border that showed the delta variant, because it was more contagious and virulent, posed a real threat. This government chose, according to – the then Health minister hoped that, believed that we would achieve enough of a vaccination rate by September that we would be okay.

Madam Speaker, one's hope, one's belief is not something on which you base public health policy. We have seen the devastating impact as this government has done more damage than any other in the history of this province through our provincial health care system, and Albertans have seen that. Two different polls show that in one, 70 per cent, in the other, 80 per cent of Albertans believe that this government has utterly decimated our health care system, that it is at its worst point ever under this government.

The Deputy Government House Leader spoke about that, well, he believes there's always a need for transparency, that he's just concerned about the nature of how that should take place. He talked about there being more than 800 currently in hospital, 100 in ICU beds, and that is his reason for saying we cannot strike a committee to begin to look at this. He said he is concerned about the officials from AHS, about the front-line health care workers. Madam Speaker, where was that concern when we were on the way up to the peak of this wave? Where was that concern in August as we saw case counts double while the Premier was on vacation, where not a single minister showed their face to speak to Albertans? Albertans probably would have been happy to get 15 or 30 minutes from one of these ministers in front of a microphone answering questions about their lack of response to a crisis that everyone but this government seems to have seen building.

They would not give that. They waited until September 3 to come out and introduce a suite of half measures – a \$100 bribe to folks

who were unvaccinated, a mask mandate, and a 10 o'clock liquor curfew – and said, “Yeah, we think that should be enough,” and then sat back while case counts continued to rise, ICU beds continued to fill. Where was their concern for AHS officials and health care workers then, as they were dealing with the wave that was washing over, drowning our health care system because of this government's refusal to act?

Let's be clear, again, how we got here, Madam Speaker, and why Albertans deserve far better and why we have moved this amendment to at least try to get a bit more accountability out of this government, which they seem to be so loath to give. On July 1 the Premier was desperate to salvage his reputation from the third wave, when members of his own government and caucus wrote a letter demanding that he not introduce any health restrictions. They wanted, as the Member for Lethbridge-East suggested at the end of August, when he was one of the only people that we actually heard from from this government, that the virus should simply be allowed to rip through the population and see how it comes out.

Now, the Premier, of course, and the Health minister at the time certainly, once again, acted last, acted least, waited until the last minute when the wave was rising, allowed it to put incredible pressure on our health care system but thankfully did not go as far as the members of his caucus were demanding. Albertans watched as the government sat politically paralyzed for weeks and allowed that to happen. So we get to the end of June, the government's third and different, again, reopening strategy, and the Premier declares that as of July 1 he's going to lift all restrictions, because the Premier needed to try to save his reputation from the incredible damage he had done to it with the third wave. In so doing, as has been acknowledged by Dr. Deena Hinshaw, they set the course for the fourth wave.

The Premier gambled, and we once again found ourselves in a position throughout the month of August into early September where this government again sat politically paralyzed. Apparently no one was able to take any action without the Premier's blessing, and he was off on vacation. Albertans deserve to know what this government knew and when. They deserve to know why not one minister or member of this government spoke up about the concerns they have, that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek says they had at least 30 days' notice of. Thirty days' notice. That means they all knew throughout the month of August what was coming and where we were going to end up if they did not act. Where was their concern for the AHS officials, for health care workers, heck, for their own unvaccinated constituents then?

So to suggest, Madam Speaker, that it is adequate for them to offer Albertans a debate that's likely to be over in less than three hours, 30 minutes Q and A with the Premier, 15 with the Health minister, 15 minutes with the minister who sat – well, admittedly, this minister inherited a good bit of this mess, indeed, from the minister who's now responsible for this government's decision to cause the most damage we have ever seen to our health care system, something that will take months to recover from. At least 8,500 cancelled surgeries, cancer patients having their surgeries delayed, children that needed surgeries for their very quality of life delayed because this government was busy fighting amongst itself over taking a simple health measure that was already being put in place by multiple other provinces. Albertans deserve more time than 15 minutes from the minister responsible.

9:40

Of course, we know this is a government that repeatedly hides from scrutiny. Indeed, this reminds me of the situation at the very beginning of this pandemic where we had our budget. I had spent hours of preparation for the six hours that I was to have with the

Health minister, and this government used the cover of the first wave to cancel budget estimates and institute a system very similar to this where that six hours was reduced to less than one.

That is the repeated behaviour of this government, yet they will spend 2 and a half million dollars and over two years on a politically motivated witch hunt which yielded absolutely nothing however they may try to spin the numbers and misquote the facts. It just goes to show that this is a government that will time and time again put politics ahead of the actual good of Albertans.

The Deputy Government House Leader said that there are so many important things here we need to talk about, that we need to talk about, you know, the environment for investment and prosperity. Madam Speaker, what about this fourth wave said to you that Alberta was a great place for investment and prosperity? What about this government's utter incompetence, their utter crashing of the health care system, their callous disregard for public health and prioritizing their own political in-fighting, what about that said to businesses that this is a great place to come and invest? How did that help Albertans that were already struggling? How did that help the businesses that were still recovering from the multiple times this government has allowed the case count to rise, overwhelm our health care system, and force new restrictions because of their political ideology and their own in-fighting?

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Language Creating Disorder**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you. I'm just looking for the Standing Orders, but 23(h), (i), and (j), I suspect, is where we're going to go with this, language that is disruptive to the Assembly or likely to cause disorder. Madam Speaker, you must understand that I understand that the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is very passionate about this issue, and I respect the passion, but I take serious issue with the suggestion that this government is specifically responsible for the deaths that have happened in this province. This is an indiscriminate virus that does not care about anything besides transmitting itself as fast as possible, and the government has taken as many steps as possible to mitigate the transmission of this virus while also ensuring that we can have a functioning economy.

Now, the point of order that I'm raising here is that this language is borderline dangerous because the kind of rhetoric that member is using right now goes out to the general public, and people take that and think that we have the ability to stop it outright and get to zero case counts with this virus. Madam Speaker, I'm getting very passionate about this because I am tired of the opposition blaming this government for the virus. I would ask that that member be careful with the language he uses so as not to create disorder in this Chamber but also to be careful to not create disorder outside of this Chamber. What we say in this Chamber has serious effects on the general public. I love the passion, but I ask all members of this Assembly to exercise caution in the language we use so as not to create disorder.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) is not there to protect this government from having their feelings hurt; 23(h), (i), and (j) is not appropriate here. The Deputy Government House Leader did not use a quote from the debate of this member; he used words this member never said. I would like



to be very clear that government policy decisions have led to the deaths of Albertans. That is not insulting language. That is a matter of record and debate in this House, and the Official Opposition is well within their bounds to bring that into this Chamber, to have a very serious discussion about how government policy and government decisions impacted the resulting fourth wave and has led to infections and death in Albertans. Government policy impacts outcomes. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I'd really like to hear the other side of this point of order, and I'm having a very hard time listening to the member who has the floor, which is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't belabour the point because I believe that the Deputy Government House Leader is extending debate, but I have listened very, very closely to the arguments from the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. They have been evidence based. They have been an accurate, historical recounting of what happened during the months of June, July, August, and September, of when this government brought in health orders, and of the impacts. I do not think that this is a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, thank you. I appreciate both sides of the arguments for this debate. I would agree that this is a matter of debate; however, this is a great opportunity to express caution to all members of this House in using inflammatory language that could cause disorder in this Assembly. While we have a limited amount of time left on this debate, I suggest we get back to it.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As of July 1 the delta variant in the province of Alberta accounted for 40 per cent of all cases, the day on which this government chose to lift all public health restrictions based on the analysis of a single jurisdiction, the U.K. Two months later, one month after this government declared that they were in fact going to end all testing, tracing, and isolation in the province of Alberta, they decided that we were moving from pandemic to endemic. One month after that the delta variant accounted for just under 100 per cent of cases in the province of Alberta.

There was no shortage of people speaking up and warning the government that this would be the case. It took two weeks of constant protest by health care workers, parents, and everyday Albertans outside this Legislature and the McDougall Centre in Calgary to get the government simply to continue those most basic of public health measures even as case counts were rising. When they reversed that two weeks later, we had effectively seen our hospitalizations, ICUs pretty much double and still not a word from any minister or member of this government. That, without question, led to far more infections, people in ICUs, and, yes, Madam Speaker, deaths, which is why the people of Alberta deserve far more accountability than what this government is putting on the record.

As I said, this is a government that has been willing to spend endless amounts of resources attempting to besmirch the reputations of others, to attack others for their free speech, over two years, 2 and a half million dollars on an inquiry that produced nothing. For something that has had an incredible impact on the province of Alberta, I'd say one of the most egregious lacks of accountability and responsibility we have ever seen from a government in this province, they want to account just under three

hours of polite, controlled debate that does not cause disorder: 30 minutes with the Premier, 15 minutes with the Health minister, and 15 minutes for any other minister. That is an insult, Madam Speaker. That is not accountability, that is not transparency, and that will do nothing to reduce the incredible anger that Albertans currently feel towards this government.

9:50

Now, the reason for this debate, the reason for that committee is not to stir up anger. It is to provide accountability. Will anger be a by-product? Absolutely, Madam Speaker, and that is indeed, as the Deputy Government House Leader noted, why there is this passion in my voice. This has had a devastating impact on our province, however much they may wish to ignore it, to duck it, to hide from it, and attempt to pretend that it did not happen.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join the debate on amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. This is an important matter for the people of this province and indeed an important matter for all of us in this House, and that is on the subject of government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me begin by offering my thanks and gratitude to all of Alberta's health care workers and those front-line staff that have dedicated their lives in caring for fellow Albertans who have been hit hard by the fourth wave of this pandemic. On behalf of this government and all of us in this province I do want to offer my sincere gratitude for the work that they do each and every day.

Madam Speaker, let's be clear. What the members opposite – indeed, it is shameful for me to sit here and listen to the Member for Edmonton-City Centre make all kinds of broad accusations and false allegations about this government's response to the pandemic. I understand that this is a matter that is of absolute importance to all of us. Whether you are of the right or of the left or of the centre of our political spectrum, all of us would want to do everything we can to make sure that our people do not suffer from this fourth wave. But let's be clear. This is a pandemic that every single jurisdiction on Earth is dealing with, and this is a pandemic that every single government, whether you are of the right or of the centre or of the left, is dealing with. This is a virus and a pandemic that – so many jurisdictions have passed through waves, with their human toll and consequences.

For this Member for Edmonton-City Centre to sit here and accuse this government of being responsible for the deaths of fellow Albertans as a consequence of the response is shameful, but I am not surprised because that is, you know, the NDP's approach to this pandemic from the start of this pandemic. This is the only opposition party in this country and that I have seen around the world that has not been constructive, has not offered anything constructive in working with the government in a manner that deals with this virus, that brings our people together so that we can confront a common challenge. For them, it's all about politics. For them . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** I suggest you go to [albertasfuture.ca](http://albertasfuture.ca).

**Mr. Madu:** I can see the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford heckling. I did not heckle. I sat here when you guys were spewing all kinds of false accusations. I have the floor.

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

## Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Ms Gray:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I hesitate to extend debate, but under 23(h), (i), and (j) the minister has accused us of false accusations. I believe that is unparliamentary language in this place, particularly given, again, the response that we have introduced, which was fact based and centred on government policy. The government seems to be very sensitive about this. We have not accused the government of anything. We have been speaking of decisions, policy. I believe the language he just used was a point of order.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Schow:** Oh, Madam Speaker, I relish the opportunity to argue this point of order because I believe that in the not-so-distant past I argued the same thing, suggesting that the member opposite from Edmonton-City Centre was making false accusations, and the hon. Opposition House Leader simply said that my feelings were hurt. The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General did not specifically name a member in the opposition caucus. He said that they are spewing falsehoods or whatever the specific wording was used. This is not a point of order. This is, rather, a matter of debate, and if her feelings are hurt, then maybe she should recognize that I made the same point of order and was ruled against, so, you know, tit-for-tat.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I tend to agree. We're getting in a bit of a repetitive situation here, hon. members. This is not a point of order. This is a matter of debate. But I will express now for the second time that we should all watch carefully the words that we say in this House to not incite each other. It is still, in my opinion, very early in the morning to be having these types of disagreement and vitriol in this House, so, members, please take caution in the words that you use.

The hon. Minister of Justice has the floor.

## Debate Continued

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are dealing with a pandemic and a virus that doesn't discriminate where you live in this world. It doesn't matter whether you live on the continent where I was born and raised, it doesn't matter whether you live in Asia, and it doesn't matter whether you live in Europe or in North America. Every government is dealing with the same thing. We've seen tens of thousands of people, unfortunately, die in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, in North America.

At the end of the day, this government has sought to respond to this pandemic in a manner that minimizes the impact of the virus on our people and society whilst empowering our public health officials and front-line staff to better manage this pandemic.

There is consensus across the globe, across the medical community that the vaccine is the only thing that is going to end this pandemic. In fact, there is consensus right now that the vaccine does not even prevent the spread of the virus. People who are doubly vaccinated are still having to contract the virus. That is a fact. It's a fact that no one can dispute in this Assembly. It's also a fact that people who are doubly vaccinated are also having serious medical conditions, even to the point of having to die suddenly from this deadly virus, one that we have not seen in our lifetime.

The people of Alberta expect us to understand the nature of this particular pandemic and work together to minimize its impact on our people and society, not these extreme partisan politics from members opposite right from the inception of this pandemic in this

province, March of 2020, when this province went into a public state of health emergency. Madam Speaker, that is not how we are going to overcome this crisis.

Madam Speaker, this province has by far per capita the most expensive health care system in this country. There's nothing that this government has done to reduce the funding that goes to the Department of Health, by and large, every given year of between \$19 billion to \$23 billion. That hasn't changed. In fact, we have increased the budget for Health. If I'm not mistaken, the year of the pandemic, in 2020, we increased the Health budget by \$500 million, with a contingency budget to deal with the pandemic of \$1.5 billion; in this fiscal year: the same thing, an additional \$2.5 billion in contingency funding to deal with the pandemic.

We have, this government has, opened the treasury, the Alberta treasury, to make sure that our front-line staff, the public officials, the Department of Health, Alberta Health Services have all of the money that this province can afford to deal with this pandemic, so I do not understand where the members opposite and especially the Member for Edmonton-City Centre is coming from.

10:00

You know, Madam Speaker, it is also only the Member for Edmonton-City Centre that would come before the floor of this Assembly and argue that this government is only interested in a public inquiry that achieves nothing, a public inquiry that seeks to unveil the sources of funding that have targeted, that have sought to destroy the most critical sector of the Alberta economy. Who in this Assembly should be surprised by that? After all, the members opposite at various points in time in their political life have had to protest against that sector of our economy. No surprise there. But the vast majority of Albertans expect us, expect this government and their elected officials, to defend our province's best interests. That's what we have sought to do as a government since being elected.

Madam Speaker, I have always said that our response to this pandemic should not be a source of division for this province. As I said, it doesn't matter what part of the province where you live, whether you're Black, White, Asian, Latino, Filipino, or Indigenous. All of us have been impacted by this pandemic.

I can tell you as a member of the Executive Council that we have devoted our time to making sure that we deal with this pandemic. We regularly, for hours, sometimes 10 hours every single now and then, meet with folks from the Department of Health, folks from the public service, the chief medical officer of health, the president and CEO of Alberta Health Services to make sure that we are all on the same page and taking into cognizance the science and the empirical data in developing public policy in response to this pandemic.

What would the members opposite want us to do? Play politics with the government response to the pandemic. That really is their policy option. Let's hold a public inquiry in the midst of a deadly fourth wave.

**Mr. Shepherd:** That you created.

**Mr. Madu:** You can see the Member for Calgary-Buffalo accusing us of creating the fourth wave. Or the Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

There is no single jurisdiction on Earth that has not dealt with waves of this pandemic. And that's how shameful, Madam Speaker, it is to really sit down here and listen to the members opposite. NDP governments have dealt with waves of this pandemic. Progressive Conservative governments have dealt with waves of this pandemic. Liberal governments have weathered this

pandemic. And, yes, Conservative governments have dealt with waves of this pandemic.

By the way, Madam Speaker, I would submit that one of the reasons why we were not better prepared to deal with the various waves of this pandemic was because of the failure on the part of the federal government to get the vaccines on time. Now we do have the vaccines, and thank goodness for that. But there was a time in the life of this pandemic when we, provinces in this country, struggled to have the vaccine to be better prepared to deal with the pandemic, whilst, you know, the United States and Europe were well advanced in their distribution in the pandemic to their population who were behind. And I don't recall hearing a single word from the members opposite criticizing the federal government for their failure to ensure we had the vaccine on time. Never did. Not once. Why? Because, in my own book, there is no distinction between the NDP and the Liberals.

I want to appeal to all of us, whether you sit on that side of the aisle or those of us in government, to be deliberate and to be cautious in how we approach this response because it doesn't matter whether or not you are on this side of the aisle. As I have said, across the globe every government is dealing with this. You would still be confronted with the same challenges. At the end of the day, what is important is whether or not government has risen to the challenge of making sure that we understand the discriminatory nature of this virus, especially the delta variant, and whether or not government has made available the resources required by the professionals, the public health officials, the front-line staff to better be prepared.

Madam Speaker, there was a time in the life of this pandemic when this province led the entire country in PPE procurement and distribution, to the extent where we had to lend some to other provinces to be better prepared when they were dealing with a wave in their own province that was as severe as the one we are dealing with right now. We did that and we did not complain because that is what Albertans expect us to do.

We managed the first and second waves of this pandemic in a manner that was comparable to those provinces and jurisdictions that have done well in the management of the pandemic. Sadly, we are confronted with a deadly fourth wave. That is not as a result of anyone's making. It was simply the nature of that virus that we are dealing with, and to sit here and listen to the members opposite accuse this government of being responsible for the fourth wave should be condemned in absolute terms.

We can entertain argument and debate as to whether or not government has risen to the challenge and provided the resources required, and they say that we have. They whine and complain about this summer. I did see the members opposite at Calgary Stampede having fun as well. They held multiple parties. I saw them. I saw members opposite at the Edmonton events here in the summer, enjoying the summer, the open for summer. They did enjoy that. Albertans welcomed that. I am not ashamed of that, and I will defend that any time, any day. Madam Speaker, we will manage and deal with this pandemic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't talk very long, but I just want to put on the record a few thoughts. I want to start by first saying that I for one am glad for the presence of my colleague from Edmonton-City Centre and his work as the critic of Health.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

## Point of Order

### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Schow:** I do understand that it is a long-standing tradition that we don't recognize the presence or absence of a member in this Chamber. The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* suggested: I'm honoured to have the presence of the Member for Edmonton-City Centre. [interjections] Hey, rules are rules.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I don't know if that counts, hon. member. It's certainly not necessarily what I heard in the intent that it was made.

Given the nature of the time crunch, hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*, please proceed.

## Debate Continued

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much. We'll just continue on and continue on to say that the Health critic is doing a great job in providing debate here, and it's not the same as government members. No. It's not expected to be the same. There are different points of view, and we're talking about the government response to COVID-19 and that there is not one reality around that. I can tell you because I attended many, many protests at the McDougall Centre in Calgary, where thousands of people have a different view of the government response that I'm hearing from that side today, Madam Speaker.

I just want to say that the amendment that we've put on the floor with regard to Motion 100 seems to me like the bare minimum. I look at Motion 100, and you need a playbook on part C (a) through (i) and all the subclauses to figure out what the heck is going to go on in this Chamber when we do have this debate, which may be three hours in length.

10:10

You know, the special select committee that we've talked about, all-party, of course, is to publicly review the pandemic management and fix crucial mistakes. When is the time to fix crucial mistakes? What I'm hearing from members of the opposite side is that it's after we see the demise or the end or the endemic of COVID-19 in this province. I would submit that that will be too late, and there will be unnecessary deaths in this province if we don't look at the issue of the pandemic response, government's pandemic response, and what can be done to correct it going forward so that there is a lessened fifth wave, so that there is a lessened impact on our society.

Madam Speaker, you know, what greater concern is there in this province at this time than COVID-19? We're kind of broaching 3,100 deaths of Albertans, and if there is a time to try and figure out how we see a smaller number of deaths going forward, this is the time. I would argue that it should have been also months and months and months ago, but the government says that the May 27, 2020, matter was the last time that this was before this House. It's shocking that we see over a year and a few months, four months, five months, since that time, and we haven't had any fulsome discussion.

You know, I heard in an earlier debate that somebody said that this Motion 100 will give us a fulsome deep dive into the government's COVID-19 response and that it's good enough to bring ministers to the table. Well, it's not. We really need to think about and hear from experts in this area, and we're not taking front-line people to add that to our debate. We would be kind of working with, in an all-party committee, not only members of AHS but other experts. That's what I think Albertans want us to do.

A special select committee wouldn't be for necessarily just us. It's for Albertans to get the information. It's for Albertans to understand what was done and what could be done better going forward. There's far too much hiding from all of that. I would say that, you know, we can't continue to act last and least. We have to do something more robust. More robust is this select special committee idea. That's where transparency comes from, Madam Speaker. That's where we can truly develop a consensus with each other and go forward in a way with Albertans feeling confident. I don't think they feel confident that we have that. We certainly don't have a consensus among us. I don't think Albertans, then, have the benefit of their elected representatives going shoulder to shoulder and looking out for their best interests.

Those are the things I wanted to get on record, Madam Speaker. You know, the concerns that I've heard over the many months and the many thousands of people that I'm aware of who have been arguing for more to be done, whether it's mask mandates, whether it's other forms of health protections – they don't see that this government has their back, their best intent, and that's what a select special committee would do. We would be able to air those things together, and this Motion 100, again, is not fulsome. It's not transparent. It's not getting the information that Albertans require to the table.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this. I want to address one particular aspect in the very brief time that I have available to me, and that is that there have been statements made in this House that all jurisdictions are dealing with this pandemic and therefore this government should not be held accountable for its actions. I just want to point out that the issue is not that all jurisdictions are dealing with the issue but, rather, that some are dealing with it competently and others are not dealing with it competently.

The accusation has been made that across Canada, for example, there have been people that have died regardless of the political stripe of the party. I respect that that's true, but I just want to note a couple of things. Statistics Canada is indicating, for example, that the rate of death in British Columbia, which has a different political party running their government, is such that they have just over 2,000 deaths so far – about 204,000 cases have occurred – while in Alberta we have just over 3,000 deaths and 322,000 cases. If you look at that on a prorated basis, in B.C. they have about 419 deaths per million, and in Alberta we have 682 deaths per million. My point is that, yes, everyone is dealing with a very difficult situation. In the province of Alberta the response has been incompetent, and the result is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 270 deaths per million people more. That's on Alberta's response. That's a lot of people to die. That's over 1,200 people dead who would not be dead if our response had been different. That's what we're saying here, and that is why we need a proper response here.

The government is saying: "The crisis is not over. Why are we having a review now?" We are having a review because the response is incompetent. When things go wrong, you don't wait until it's all over to try to change course. You are in the wrong place. You are doing the wrong thing. It is time to stand up and take responsibility and apologize to every citizen in this province for threatening their well-being and for participating in a response to COVID that has resulted in excess of 1,200 extra deaths over what would have been had we adopted the responses of other parts of the country. That's what I'm saying. I'm saying that it's incompetent, the numbers show that it's incompetent, and the poll that came out today says that it's incompetent.

The response in British Columbia is that 66 per cent of the population believes the government is doing a good job with regard to COVID. In Alberta we hit 20 per cent. Twenty per cent of the people in this province think this government has been competent. That's 80 per cent that think this government has been incompetent. Remember, Kenney has just recently said that the number . . .

**Mr. Madu:** Point of order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Sorry. I apologize. I withdraw right away. I should not have said that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are you satisfied?

**Mr. Madu:** Yes.

**Mr. Feehan:** The Premier said that the number 61.7 is an overwhelming result, and now they must admit that 80 per cent is a much more overwhelming result. If they think 61 is important, 80 must be that much more important.

What we have is a declaration by the citizens of this province and the numbers of deaths rate indicating that the response in this province has actually been deadly, has resulted in the deaths of Albertans, on average approximately 1,200 deaths over what it should have been had a competent response been initiated. That's why we need to have this opportunity in the House to properly talk to these ministers. They certainly stand up and waste our time, every minister that wants to, to talk about this motion, but they don't want to stand up and actually talk about their response to COVID, the demonstration of lack of accountability, the failure to stand up and speak to the province of Alberta and tell the province of Alberta why they have been wrong, why they need to apologize, and why they really should not even be in the position of governing this province, because it has resulted in over 1,200 extra deaths.

You know, it just appalls me, this government's response and their absolute lack of taking responsibility for this, the things that they have done to declare it over and to open up the province when there was no reason to do that, no scientific reason to do that. The resistance to vaccine passports, the lifting of mask mandates, the abandonment of test, trace, and isolate protocols: these are all absolutely repulsive behaviours and cannot be accepted.

10:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 102, agreed to on October 27, 2021, I must now put the following question on amendment A1 to Government Motion 100 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the motion itself.

[Government Motion 100 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 49 Labour Mobility Act

[Debate adjourned October 27: Mr. Sabir speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join debate on second reading of Bill 49? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to join in second reading debate of Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act, and the changes that are coming in. This piece of legislation has been introduced to remove barriers for labour mobility. Simply put, the idea behind this legislation is to ensure that highly skilled and trained workers from across Canada are able to come and join the Alberta workforce with as few barriers as possible.

Now, Bill 49 is an interesting piece of legislation because you will note that the other bills we are debating in this House right now all start in the 70s. Bill 49 has been on our Order Paper for a significant amount of time. So as I begin my remarks on the Labour Mobility Act, I simply want to start just by my understanding of the consultation process and how this act has come to be, because there are a few concerns.

I understand that of the 100-plus regulated occupations that Bill 49 will impact, there are a number of regulatory bodies that are named specifically in schedule 1 and then not named in schedule 2 but are under the auspices of the ministries that are named. They were invited to, as some stakeholders are describing them, information sessions, some consultations that were held in very short order in the summer of 2020. I've heard directly from stakeholders that said that it felt like there was a rush, that it felt like decisions had already been made and they were being informed, that as regulatory organizations they were used to a very high level of engagement and two-way conversation. They didn't necessarily feel that happening. This rushed consultation happened in the summer of 2020. Then this bill was placed on the Order Paper, and it has been there ever since, until finally being introduced just this first week of our new fall session.

I'm very curious to know from the government whether they feel that adequate consultation took place with all of the many organizations of varied size and expertise – some are nonprofits that rely on volunteers; others are much larger and have paid staff to handle these things – and why I'm hearing from stakeholders that they felt like there was a rushed consultation and then this bill was subsequently not introduced for well over a year. Finally, I'm hearing from stakeholders that many of them didn't know that it was going to be introduced on Monday, so then they were caught by surprise that the legislation was now in front of the Alberta Legislative Assembly. That failure to communicate, to me, raises a good deal of questions, and I'm quite surprised by that. As we enter into second reading and we have the opportunity to make broad comments about the contents of this legislation and related topics, I hope that through the debate on this piece of legislation we will be able to find out more about who was consulted and how.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

As with so many bills brought forward by this government, the implementation of Bill 49 is going to rely heavily on the development of the regulations. "Deferring to regulations" is certainly a phrase uttered in this Chamber many, many times since the 2019 election, and in Bill 49 the regulations are going to be incredibly important, because the devil is in the details. These regulated occupations will only be able to request from applicants information that is defined in these regulations, and the information is going to vary significantly from organization to organization. Professional engineers and professional architects are going to need different information than our funeral service providers, but they are all captured under the same legislation. So I imagine, although I do not know, that when the regulations are drafted, there's going to need to be more than 100 different sections for each regulated occupation. That is what I would guess.

Although the initial consultation or information sessions have been flagged to me as potentially not as robust or two-way a conversation as one might hope – I imagine that there may have been some political initiative towards getting these conversations done so that some of the platform campaign commitments could be filled in – now that we are into debating this legislation, assuming this legislation passes this Legislature, really in-depth, one-on-one conversations between the department and each regulated organization and occupation are going to be incredibly important. Because the devil is in the details, as we've said under other pieces of legislation, the regulations here are going to be more critical.

I'm still consulting – there are a lot of people impacted by this bill – but one concern that I've heard already is the concern that because of the way the bill is drafted, regulatory organizations will only be able to ask an applicant for certain types of information that will be prescribed by regulation. The concern has been raised to me multiple times that they're worried that it may not account for the ability to ask for information or ask the applicant about their standing in their home jurisdiction when it comes to complaints or any professional challenges, the concern being that we do not want bad actors jumping from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. If someone is not in good standing in another province, we do not necessarily want them to automatically be accepted here in Alberta under Bill 49, which is intended to reduce barriers – positive – but the negative impact could be if the regulatory agencies aren't able to ask for all information. That is something that the regulations, hopefully, will see out, but I think it's an important enough concern that I wanted to enter it into the debate early.

A lot of the regulatory agencies and organizations that I'm consulting with have identified that they have robust reciprocity programs. Quite a few of them, in fact many, have said that Bill 49 will not pose a challenge because their current processes are so robust to begin with. Now, there are a few others who have suggested that because they are of nonprofit status, because they are staffed by volunteers, some of the timelines may be difficult. I think these are important concerns that will have to be dealt with, dealing with each of these 100-plus regulated occupations as we go forward.

Now, I do want to mention very briefly that some of the stakeholders have wondered about the level of fines that are in Bill 49, whether the fines are intended to be punitive rather than remedial, because they are significant, and I think that's an important concern.

When it comes to Bill 49 and attracting skilled workers to Alberta, I have to ask if the recognition of credentials within Canadian jurisdictions and the application timelines – Bill 49 will put in a 20-day timeline – are the biggest barrier for workers wanting to come to Alberta. I would suggest that when we've seen changes most recently, including a net outflow from Alberta to other jurisdictions over the last while, particularly during the pandemic – and, in fact, right now the net outflow from Alberta is essentially worse than during the 2014-2016 recession. I don't think that that's because professional credentials are not being recognized in a fast enough manner.

**10:30**

I think we have a number of issues when we talk about the affordability in our province, when we talk about a government that has a reputation now of picking fights with doctors and nurses, a government that has a reputation of having poorly managed the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the fourth wave, when we talk about increasing insurance costs, electricity costs. Other factors: a government bringing in a curriculum that, frankly, scares a number of parents because they don't see something forward-looking that will prepare their children for the future. Instead, they see

something regressive that has been done with a very small number of experts that parents and school boards, who have resoundingly rejected it, have a lot of concerns with. These are things that skilled tradespeople and skilled workers consider when they decide whether or not they're going to move to Alberta.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So reducing the barriers and making sure that within 20 days your professional accreditation will be acknowledged here in Alberta: great. I don't think this gets to the root of the problem of why Alberta is losing skilled workers and why Alberta is losing youth workers. Specifically, we've seen recently that when it comes to young workers the age of 20-24, that demographic is absolutely leaving our province. These are serious issues that we need to keep an eye on. Bill 49 purports to touch on the edges of them, but I don't think gets to the heart of the matter, and that's something that I think is really important that we enter into the record on the debate on Bill 49.

We need to have a real plan for attracting people to live here in Alberta. We need to be implementing legislation and regulation that removes barriers but doesn't add significant increased costs to these organizations as well as we need to make sure that Bill 49 doesn't become a race to the bottom of professional quality and training, something that the regulations are going to have a significant impact on and can be managed, but it relies on there being a very deep and fulsome conversation between the stakeholders that Bill 49 impacts and these over 100 regulated occupations. We need to continue to support Albertans. We need to be focused on making sure that there are good, mortgage-paying jobs here in our province, and we need to continue to evaluate this piece of legislation and raise concerns as we go forward.

Now, I've raised a few concerns about the consultation process, questions. I'd love to find out more about how that was taken.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was that this piece of legislation follows in the footsteps of the Fair Registration Practices Act. Now, the Labour Mobility Act is specifically for Canadian jurisdictions whereas the Fair Registration Practices Act was for out-of-country applicants to work in their professional designation, so they're slightly different. Madam Speaker, the Fair Registration Practices Act was introduced in 2019, came into effect on March 1, 2020. The regulations to implement that, to actually allow a foreign-trained doctor to come into Canada and to have some of those timelines: those regulations haven't been passed. When it comes to fairness for newcomers, this government put it in their platform. They passed legislation very early in their term. They've said a lot of pretty languages, a lot of pretty words. They haven't acted. They haven't done it. The regulations aren't there. That really brought to mind, for me, looking at the Labour Mobility Act: how long is it going to take for regulations to be implemented? This government seems to be content to have an announcement and then consider the job done.

Right now in my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods I am very pleased to have residents and constituents from all around the world who have chosen to come to Alberta and have chosen to make Mill Woods their home. Today it is no easier for them to work in their chosen profession than it was in 2019 when the government made the promises found in the Fair Registration Practices Act because they haven't followed through and implemented those regulations. They created a fairness for newcomers office that will pick up the phone, answer some questions but can't actually do anything. The government needs to follow through on the announcements and the pretty words with action.

As we debate the Labour Mobility Act, I would love to know what is happening with the regulations in the Fair Registration

Practices Act. Where are we in the implementation of fairness for newcomers that this government has spoken about and promised but not delivered? The fact that today it is no easier, I think, is significant given that that legislation was debated in 2019, two years ago. We're almost at the end of this year. It'll be 2022 very shortly. When can newcomers expect that, when can the regulated professions expect that follow-up, and how long will it take to do the regulations for Bill 49? As I said earlier at the start of my remarks, it seems like the regulations are going to need a lot of detail, and the consultation process is going to be significant.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join debate? Just a reminder that interventions are at play. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am following my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods, which is a dangerous thing to do when speaking to a bill having to do with labour mobility because – I would not have known that it might require 100 different pages of regulations per regulated profession – certainly my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods not only is intimately familiar with matters related to the fair practices and registration of foreign credentials, which is a piece of work that she worked on quite a bit before when she was the minister responsible for the matter, but also given the high level of service that she provides her constituents. This is dangerous territory for me to be in in terms of providing a level of erudition that can compete with my hon. colleague, but let's see what we can do here.

This Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act, seeks to – whenever I look at a piece of legislation, the first thing that I like to do to kind of break it down is: what is the problem to be solved here? As near as I can tell, the problem to be solved here is that oftentimes when various kinds of regulated professions or occupations want to move to Alberta, there might be excessive wait times, there might be issues related to attraction and retention for firms trying to bring in those specific types of occupations, there might be an excessive wait time, or other ways in which different jurisdictions regulate these occupations such that there is crossthreading that essentially redounds to the effect of not being helpful to people who are just trying to make decisions about whether they're going to buy a piece of property here and move here or for firms who are trying to get a specific kind of person to come to Alberta to do a specific kind of job so that they can continue, you know, with their previously understood investment plans, growth plans, and so on. In that respect, then, the government has brought forward this piece of legislation, and that part is all fine.

I take the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods quite seriously, then, when we see that when the fair practices piece of legislation was introduced, which we supported, in the – whenever it was – spring, summer of 2019, that the regulations have not been published yet. That means then that that sense of urgency that has accompanied the government's statements around this Bill 49, the piece that is before us, and the sense of urgency that they communicated in 2019 does not seem to be there in terms of the actual follow-through of the competence of governing.

**10:40**

This is a topic that we have canvassed this morning, and I would argue that it is threaded within many of the conversations that we are having here in this Legislature given that there seem to be quite a few delays in terms of the actual governing aspects of how Executive Council does its job, which is the type of work that

requires one to focus on consulting out regulations after a piece of legislation has come through the House, receiving all of the various pieces of information that are required both from stakeholder groups but also then the appropriate advice from Parliamentary Counsel and getting your stuff through cabinet. There's all that formal process, and then there's just the straight work of getting up to cabinet.

That seems to be the piece that is enormously delayed within this government, and the effects are that if the Labour Mobility Act is in fact proposing to solve an urgent problem with respect to our labour market conditions, then it ought to be taken with a lot more seriousness than the previous iteration of this type of legislation, that being the Fair Registration Practices Act.

Given that, Madam Speaker, past behaviour is an excellent predictor of future behaviour, because this is the only piece of legislation that we have before us, at least so far in our time here together this first week of the fall sitting, that has anything even remotely to do with jobs and the economy, the central preoccupation of the people of Alberta, the problem to be solved here, I'm going to assume, is that we do have some challenges with respect to our labour market. That is to say that our unemployment figures, particularly among youth, are some of the highest, I guess, in Canada.

We have a number of issues related to out-migration. We have a number of issues related to the fact that we are not seeing a rebound in capital spending at all from the large firms that have benefited enormously from the reduction in the corporate income tax rate. Employment has not rebounded as a result of that particular decision. We remain in a place where the availability of employment has been subsumed by the sheer, breathtaking incompetence of the response to the public health crisis with COVID-19 in terms of Albertans' central preoccupation. But it remains there, those issues related to economic certainty, in particular economic certainty resulting from having a job.

What we see here, both in how this piece of legislation came to be – that is to say that it has been languishing on the Order Paper for some time – also within the government's relative level of lassitude when it comes to publishing of regulations on other issues related to labour mobility but also the lack of action on anything else related to labour market development, we see that this legislation does not respond to the needs of Albertans. Albertans, as I said last night, are voting with their feet in response to this government's economic policy.

That is to say that we are now – StatsCan has just published the fifth consecutive quarter in a row of out-migration coming out of Alberta. According to ATB Financial – they just published a report entitled *Alberta Losing Residents to B.C.* – “about 77,000 people came to Alberta ... between April 2020 and June 2021 while almost 93,000 left ... The second quarter of 2021 saw a net outflow of 5,447.” Now, there is a city of Calgary survey that came out last year. Among those in the 18 to 24 age bracket, 27 per cent said that they would likely move away from the province's largest city in about five years.

The issue here isn't people coming to Alberta. The issue here is people leaving Alberta because they do not see the kinds of economic or social optimism, and they do not see themselves building that life that we want them to stay and build here in Alberta. We want them to find a job. We want them to buy a home. We want them to contribute to our communities in ways both paid and unpaid. We want them to contribute to the vibrant civil society life and contribute their volunteerism and so on.

The problem to be solved here is actually more of a structural issue at this point. It is a structural issue, too, because folks in some

of the large industrial oil sands companies and others are not reinvesting in capital spending. I mean, you don't have to take that from me. You can read it in Budget 2021. I don't have the page number offhand, but it is listed right there. We are not expecting an increase in capital spending as a result of changing economic conditions. In fact, that prediction by Treasury Board and Finance in the fiscal plan that came out in February 2021 was underlined yet again last week when a number of firms put out either in their quarterly earnings calls or in their actual written documents that, no, they are going to be taking this increasing cash, this temporary – well, you know, it's volatile, so who knows whether it's temporary? Who knows what's happening with oil prices?

That's why it's important to diversify, so that we are not as a province hostages to those particular fortunes. But right now what we see is companies being very, very clear about what they are going to be doing with their enormous profits that they are experiencing right now, and it is not employing people by investing in capital or otherwise. They have said: “We will be doing share buybacks. We will be paying down debt. Those are the priorities.” So the CIT reduction, much lauded by this government in 2019 as a job-creation strategy, has done precisely the opposite. What we have here, then, is a piece of legislation that may not ever actually address within the short to medium term given the fact that the regulations are so delayed for that other piece of legislation – it may not ever have the chance to work in the short term. But, also, it doesn't necessarily address the particular problem that we are looking at right now.

Now, what might is a labour mobility or a labour market development act that does some things that I, in fact, heard coming from the other side I guess it was yesterday. I was quite pleased to hear the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein stand up and talk about social procurement. You know, there was quite a bit of chatter going on in the front benches, and I couldn't quite hear, so I'll have to go back and look at the *Hansard*. I mean, I'm sure that in the implementation of such a policy the hon. member and I might sharply disagree on how some of those details might be implemented. That is, in fact, the spirit of a democratic place. That's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to have different views. But if we start from a common-values perspective, then that is a helpful place to be able to move forward.

I, too, have often thought that social procurement criteria are an excellent way to ensure that we are bringing underemployed or undertrained folks into that world of work, that we are using our procurement, whether it's direct government or even via nonprofits, to ensure good training and good work and good jobs for Albertans in the first instance, the people whose well-being we are entrusted with. A labour market development act might contemplate those kinds of changes. They would be positive. You know, if regulations were developed in an appropriate time frame and if we had evidence that a government was actually focused in the first instance on governing, then it might actually have some really interesting short-to medium-term effects, particularly as we are seeing specific labour shortages.

#### 10:50

We will always see this within the labour market. In boom times and not boom times you will still have employers saying, “Well, we need this specific type of training” and so on, and it is, in fact, the role of government, postsecondary institutions of various kinds, to respond to those labour market developments and create in as broad a way as possible as many doors to walk through and ladders to climb for ordinary people rather than designing a postsecondary or otherwise system that simply slams the doors in front of people. This bill would be markedly improved with contemplating some of

those good ideas that are clearly coming from caucus members, and I think the government would benefit greatly from perhaps listening to some of those suggestions.

Just a couple of other points on this piece of legislation. You know, there are no reciprocal agreements or anticipated legislative changes in other jurisdictions to reciprocate what is being contemplated in this legislation. Once again, as we have seen through some of the interprovincial trade changes, you see – it might be overstating the case a bit, Madam Speaker – a little bit of a unilateral disarmament, if you will. If Alberta has negotiations with other provinces, whether through TILMA or the New West Partnership or any of those places, you know, this idea that we would just walk into the room having already given away everything is not a great strategy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

**Mr. Shandro:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it's not an uncommon occurrence for us to hear the NDP getting stuff wrong when we listen to them speak in this Chamber. But just to point it out, we've heard now from two members talking about the lack of regulations under the Fair Registration Practices Act. That's incorrect. You can go to CanLII. You can look it up. You can see a regulation there. Unfortunately for the NDP, another indication of them getting basic facts wrong. There is a reg for that act. It's called the fair registration practices regulation. Happy to point them to the link on CanLII so they can look up the regulations as they appear to have missed it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With this particular bill that we have before us at this time, I think it's very important that we actually address, as the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West – I just wanted to clarify; I didn't want to make a mistake – what this piece of legislation is actually trying to solve. The truth is that the problem we're having here is that for the very first time in more than 10 years we're actually seeing people leave Alberta.

I'll never forget – this was probably about two months ago now, two or three months ago, somewhere in that area – when I received a phone call from a young man from my constituency. I can't remember his name now off the top of my head. He called me, and I spent a good half an hour on the phone with this gentleman. He was talking to me about the reality that for the very first time – like, he grew up in Alberta, always thought he was going to live in Alberta. But because of the current conditions under this government and the current state of the economy, for the very first time he and his partner – and I remember him telling me that he was a really proud father – were considering actually moving out of the province of Alberta. He proceeded to tell me that it's because of the increasing costs to him and his family here in the province of Alberta, that the amount that they were making just wasn't enough to make ends meet at the end of the month, and he was particularly worried about that, you know, being a young person trying to raise a family.

This is the real problem that Albertans are bringing to our attention, and we as the opposition are trying to actually share it with you all, for you all to reflect on the issue. Of course, it's great that we support a piece of legislation that's going to attract workers to Alberta in the areas where there are shortages, but you need to address the issue of the increased costs that Alberta families are experiencing.

I have heard from a number of constituents that their household costs such as car insurance – I remember a teacher reaching out to

me. At the very beginning of the pandemic she was saying, you know, that the insurance on her car was going up, and this was a direct result of another piece of legislation that this government actually put in place. Everybody across the board is experiencing increases in insurance on their cars, on their homes. I can't tell you how many people contacted my office regarding this particular issue, this particular concern, Madam Speaker. Again, here we have a real problem, one that the government actually exacerbated with a piece of legislation. So there's strike 1. Strike 1. They just made it harder for Albertans to make ends meet at the end of the month.

We also had soaring gas bills. I can't tell you the number . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you've spent about four minutes talking about other pieces of legislation. I'd just ask that you tailor your comments or bring them around to the bill at hand.

**Member Loyola:** With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I'm actually speaking directly to the bill itself and the issues that are related to the bill. If you don't mind, I'll continue talking about exactly what my constituents are bringing to my attention in relation to labour and the needs of the province and what they're asking me to talk about in this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to have this disagreement with you, but we are discussing Bill 49, the Labour Mobility Act, and while I appreciate that you're bringing the thoughts of your constituents, as you should or as you see fit, it needs to relate to the specific piece of legislation that we have at hand. So please continue in that regard.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll continue talking about the issues that Albertans are concerned about and why they elected me to be in this House.

The rising costs are what are causing Albertans to actually leave Alberta. This is the root of the problem that we're trying to solve. I completely respect that this government is trying to do their best with this piece of legislation to attract people to come to Alberta, but if you address the root of the problem, then we wouldn't actually be seeing this out-migration of Albertans for the first time in over 10 years here in this province. At the same time, the government has chosen to eviscerate health care in rural Alberta, leading doctors to actually leave the province.

The other day we had one of the members get up and speak to numbers, that there are actually more doctors, and this is the way that the member chose to interpret these numbers as a way of making an argument that, "Hey, it's okay," but the reality is that doctors are leaving Alberta. That's the argument. Even if you wanted to say, "Okay; well, fine; what would happen if those doctors did not leave Alberta?" well, then we'd have more doctors. That's the argument that we're trying to make. Using specific numbers to say that there are actually more doctors doesn't necessarily mean that you're addressing the problem at hand, which, of course, is that doctors are leaving Alberta. [interjection] Please go ahead.

11:00

**Ms Gray:** Thank you so much to my hon. colleague for allowing an intervention on Bill 49, which is intended to allow highly skilled workers to easily and quickly get to work here in our province, removing barriers, creating a consistent approach to recognizing out-of-province credentials. What I'm hearing my colleague add into the debate right now is that when it comes to highly skilled and trained workers coming to the province of Alberta, removing the barriers of credential recognition is one piece, but there may be other barriers that Bill 49 should consider and take into account, including the fight with doctors, including cost of living, some of



those other challenges that someone choosing to come to live and work in Alberta might want to take into account.

My question to the hon. member is: does he have very many constituents who come from other places in Canada to live and work in Edmonton-Ellerslie, the riding that he represents here in this province?

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much for the interjection, hon. member. I'm hearing so much from a lot of people that are having challenges with actually coming to Alberta, and the fact that there's a number of barriers that they are having to confront in order to actually deal with the reality that they have. Specifically, truck drivers or the owners of transportation companies have been at my office a number of times expressing their concerns with the decisions that this government has made and how it impacts the transportation industry.

There's a number of people that have come to speak to me about the reality that they are indeed suffering the ills of having to get their credentials accepted here in the province of Alberta. I can't tell you the number of people that have come to talk to me about this, and I appreciate that the government did pass a piece of legislation where they address this issue, but we have yet to see any action on that particular front and actually helping people get their credentials recognized. While the government, you know, likes to shout out loud how they are getting people back to work and even some of the members on the other side will speak to the fact that they've moved that piece of legislation, nothing has been done in terms of real people getting their credentials recognized at this time. [interjection]

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Member, for allowing another intervention. Your comments about credential recognition brought to mind that the minister of labour has joined in the debate at second reading on this piece of legislation and, helpfully, corrected that regulations do exist for the Fair Registration Practices Act – entirely accurate – but, I think, may have missed the point that I was trying to make, that the regulations do not currently prescribe a maximum time for registration decisions, a key part of actually making a difference for newcomers, for people who are looking for their credentials to be recognized. So I simply wanted to, as a comment to my colleague who is speaking about credential recognition, note that in the Fair Registration Practices Act the timelines that would impact and help newcomers do not exist in those regulations.

If my language earlier was inaccurate, I appreciate the minister of labour correcting it although he seems to have missed the point, which is: what actions has he taken to assist newcomers with their credential recognition?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Member Loyola:** Well, on the particular note – and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for the interjection and for contributing that to the debate here. On that particular note, the Premier has said that other provinces have not agreed to recognize Alberta credentials in the same way but that he is working on it, so one of the questions that I have for the government is: can the government provide a timeline for these agreements? What are we looking at here? Is this a problem when under this government Alberta is seeing a net out-migration for the very first time in 10 years, as I've said?

The other ask in relation to this is: could the government provide studies that demonstrate that the bill will address labour market shortages in Alberta and actually help put Albertans back to work? What Albertans are deeply concerned of is high-paying, mortgage-paying jobs, right? At the end of the day this is what my constituents

are concerned about. This is what they would like to see, their immediate concerns being addressed.

I think that, like I was saying at the very beginning, we need to get to the root of the problem. We need to be focusing on moving in that particular direction so that those who are here in Alberta are actually getting a fair shake. They need to be able to meet their economic demands month to month and have to be focusing on that.

The question then becomes: how will this particular piece of legislation actually improve Alberta's competitive advantage within other jurisdictions? As several members of my caucus here have mentioned in debate, we need to start looking at what actually will attract more opportunities for Albertans, more jobs that are actually going to be able to help them pay the bills at the end of the day. This government also needs to focus on actually making life better for Albertans and not more difficult by, again, what I have mentioned in the past, which is coming from constituents, and that is increased insurance costs, increased utility bills, and such.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will request that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 74

### Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2021

[Adjourned debate October 27: Ms Phillips]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House to address this particular bill. It certainly is something that I care about, having taught in a university setting, actually college, for well over 25 years in part-time or full-time practice. I certainly think it's important that we take time, with our shifts in our universities and colleges and technical institutions, to ensure that we are making decisions in the right direction.

I just wanted first to speak about some of the overall concerns that I have before we get into some of the more particulars about the bill, and perhaps we'll leave some of that for a chance later in the House, when we're talking about the issues line by line. But right now I'm just concerned about a general trend in this government of moving advanced education away from the notion of education to increasingly viewing postsecondary as simply job-readiness preparation and minor skill development.

I certainly think that universities have an important role in preparing people for the workforce and giving them practical everyday skills. In fact, when I was teaching, one of my major responsibilities was the practicum components and the actual intervention skills required by social workers in their practice. I certainly took on responsibility for ensuring that skill was taught, that it was assessed, and that people graduating from the programs could actually perform particular functions that were useful in the workforce.

11:10

But at the same time in all of those courses that I taught, we also made sure that the information that the students had from those courses was set in a larger, consistent philosophical base that allowed them to understand the application of the skills and not simply the administration of the skills. That is, you know, being able to perform a particular task under prescribed circumstances is one set of learning that is important. However, you always need to be prepared for those circumstances where you are not sure what is going on, where the conditions have changed from what they were originally, where new factors have come into play. That is, you need

to have a greater understanding beyond the particulars so that you can make adjustments to the particulars based on the larger issues.

As such, universities and other postsecondary institutions very importantly need to focus on the skills of assessment, of problem solving, of philosophical and ethical orientation so that decision-making in the future can help move the practice along in ways and in situations that could not have been anticipated at the time of the training.

My concern is that this government has been somewhat remiss in understanding the role of that. It's not that I disagree with the moves that they're making, but I am worried about the direction of it and want to ensure that governments don't turn, you know, institutions like the University of Alberta into simply a job-training facility. It's always going to be an important part, as I say, and something that I certainly practised when I was teaching at universities, but I want to make sure that students who go in to learn particular skills A, B, and C also learn some of those larger skills such as understanding data analysis and good reasoning. Certainly, after listening to some of the logic coming from the other side of the House, it feels like a lot more of that could be learned for the benefit of all of us.

In this particular case I certainly support the idea that a variety of more professions should have apprenticeships attached to them. You know, in the program that I taught in, we certainly had practicums that provided an opportunity for that on-site, in-real-situation learning that was attached to the academic learning that occurred in the classroom. I think that apprenticeships are very good in helping people to make that sometimes very difficult bridge between what you learn from your textbook and how you apply that when you have a real live human being or a real live situation, building a road, a hospital situation, in front of you. I am happy to support the idea that we do have some apprenticeships moving forward.

The questions I will have as the appropriate time comes up are about the construction of how those decisions will be made. I have expressed concern in the House previously about decisions about who will be on the boards making the decisions about which programs achieve apprenticeships, and perhaps even more importantly than which programs is how that will be ordered and organized in terms of the practical requirements of students as they enter into apprenticeships and as they enter into the workforce from those apprenticeships. My questions around that as we move forward really will be around concerns about things like the minister's advisory council of higher education and skills, which is being referred to as MACHES, and how decisions will be made about who gets on that committee in terms of making those decisions. Will they be people that have particular expertise in the apprenticeship areas that are being talked about? Will the professional people have a majority on the board, or will it be government-appointed people who have no real connection either to the institution or to the particular skill or trade or profession that is being addressed? These are the kinds of things that worry me a lot.

You know, giving the boards discretion over some factors is quite reasonable. I think we'll certainly be asking questions about which decisions go to the board and which decisions remain with the minister and what range is being allowed to those boards and to the minister in terms of making decisions about appropriate curriculum and appropriate financial compensation and appropriate credentialling. All of these things are very important.

I am very concerned that overall this government has really shown a lack of respect for our higher education institutions in this province, and it makes me very nervous to watch a bill come in. I

certainly will be doing an evaluation of what I think the consequences of these particular decisions are.

I know that under this government, for example, we've seen over \$700 million in cuts to advanced institutions, the University of Alberta being the institution with the greatest amount of cuts, resulting in well over 1,500 FTEs in terms of lost teaching instruction time available to universities and other postsecondary institutions.

What we're seeing is less and less input into the well-being and the training of students as they go into various programs, whether it be apprenticeship or not. At the same time we're seeing a massive increase in terms of tuitions under this government. By approximately 15 per cent tuitions are up. In fact, the University of Alberta has just announced the largest increase in tuitions that they have ever had coming forward in the next few years because they are simply being underfunded by the government.

You know, this context in which this bill is coming forward is something that is very concerning. If you don't understand the role that higher education plays in the advancement of your society, of course, you want to diminish it, and I think that's the situation we're in right now. We're certainly watching a loss of potential in this province as a result of people making decisions about going to other places rather than studying here in Alberta because it's cheaper somewhere else or academics who came here originally because they were getting support to establish world-class labs and so on now folding up those labs and going to other places where they're getting the supports that they need in order to be successful at that elite level that creates the knowledge we all will ultimately need if we're going to be moving forward in society.

I'm very disappointed at the number of professionals – as you know, I represent an area just south of the University of Alberta. I have a significant number of academics from various institutions living in my area because of its proximity to the University of Alberta, but I also have them coming from MacEwan University and even NAIT. Even though it's across town, I seem to have some people living in my area. They come to me and they tell me with deep concern about what's happening in their institutions and the direction things are going and the fact that they are losing some great people because this is just not a situation in which they feel that they have a future. They're the sort of people that will be, you know, lined up for international prizes one day because of the work that they're doing, and we're losing them. When you're working at that high, high level, you need the supports to make it all possible, and that's not what we're seeing here in this province. I'm very concerned about that kind of loss.

**11:20**

On the other hand, I also have had the opportunity to speak with people who are in preapprenticeship program settings that are helping people who don't have all of the academic background necessary to get into the apprenticeship programs, telling me that we're seeing under this government the defunding of preapprenticeship programs. I don't quite understand how you would want to have more apprenticeship programs but you diminish the institutions in which those programs will occur and you diminish the supports for people to get into those programs in the first place. You know, you simply cannot put programs like this into a vice, squeezing from both sides, and expect them not to suffer serious consequence.

I guess I have some general overall concerns about the direction of the government. I certainly would love to see some movement forward in terms of supporting these institutions in being very successful, but I think that the government needs to understand that their role is not to pick and choose, you know, the particular skills

that are going to be necessary out in the workforce in future years but, rather, to establish the bodies and the institutions that will support students and educate students and guide students and motivate students to be successful in those occupations. It's very important that the government makes sure that they take a step back.

Decisions about how we actually help people and mentor people and work with people to get from their starting place to the place that they need to be to become excellent contributors in their chosen profession are ones that require on-site skilled people within the trade, within the profession itself helping to move those students along. It should not be made in a minister's office. I'm very cautious about how those kinds of things will be decided and, you know, how we're moving forward over the next little while in terms of our support for the institutions.

I am hoping that the minister later will come back to the House and spend a little bit of time walking us through some of the decisions that are made. We've had some quite reasonable conversations about this in the past on previous bills relating to apprenticeship, and I think that that's quite possible again here at this time. They help us to understand some of the regulatory and legal framework that's going to be established regarding the apprenticeship, help us understand a little bit more about who it is that the government has consulted with in order to establish those kinds of criteria and who will be able to make the decisions moving forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on the postsecondary institutions in the province. As the Member for Lethbridge-West was concerned about following our former labour minister on a topic essential to the bill that they were debating, I'm feeling the same kind of pressure following the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford when it comes to postsecondary institutions debate because of his vast experience in the field although I will draw upon some of the experiences I've had in the world of postsecondary education and also, of course, the concerns expressed to me by constituents who have family members facing the prospects of choosing where to attend postsecondary institutions to gain their education, to follow through and seek employment in their chosen professions later on.

That's the crux of the matter, Madam Speaker. When you bring it down to just the basics, you have young people, in particular, choosing to seek education and deciding where to go, what profession to get into, whether it be in the trades or into a profession requiring university education, and there are a number of factors that go into their decision-making process. Of course, the government with Bill 74 is directly affecting the thought process of individuals who are making these decisions about where to go to attend postsecondary education.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

As we well know, Mr. Speaker, from the evidence of recruitment efforts that we have to bring in foreign students to our postsecondary institutions, particularly our universities, one of the hopes, of course, is that by attending our institutions here, whether it be U of A or U of C or University of Lethbridge, these foreign students will, as a result of their experience at that postsecondary institution, decide to stay here. It's a form of recruitment and a form of attracting new, young professionals to the province to have them educated here.

The same thing goes, Mr. Speaker, for the interprovincial education of students. Alberta students, prospective students will

choose where to obtain their postsecondary education by using a variety of factors, but the same risk applies in terms of us losing those young people for good if they choose to obtain their postsecondary education elsewhere. That's something, I think, that this bill doesn't address in terms of how much our postsecondary institutions are being hit with budget cuts and causing people to suggest that their children might want to go, perhaps, to another jurisdiction in Canada or outside of the country to obtain their postsecondary education. It's this type of decision-making process that I think the government needs to take much more account of when they are setting policy with respect to apprenticeships and the advanced education programs and the funding of advanced education in the province.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We've had a decimation in the funding, Madam Speaker, as of late, and it's been significant cuts that have happened to postsecondary education since the former NDP government in '18-19. With the cuts in inflation-adjusted terms, i.e. population plus inflation, and the funding provided in Budget 2021-22, the UCP will have cut \$690 million in direct government of Alberta support to postsecondary institutions since the '18-19 NDP government period, and that's a 22.6 per cent reduction. Now, that's a huge amount of money, and the postsecondary institutions in the province are reeling. It's a total gut punch to them, and they are having to really readjust and pull back on programing and raise tuitions, causing students to decide, perhaps, to go elsewhere.

We really need to, I think, question why this government sees it reasonable to attack our postsecondary institutions in the way they are. Now, they're looking at, of course, budgetary matters, and they're seeing our postsecondary institutions as a reasonable victim of budget cuts. I think it's very short-sighted thinking because, of course, the institutions that we're cutting, the postsecondary institutions, the budgets that we're really hacking at are the very tools, the very fields of growth where we're going to maintain the population, the young people, the students that we want to have staying here to generate the economic growth and provide the employees for the economic growth that this government is so often glad to champion.

The individuals who will populate the positions don't graduate from high school and automatically become able to operate an agricultural food processing plant or manage the marketing department for a new electric vehicle charging station. They need to go through a process of education beyond their high school years, and we'd love that education to be undertaken here so that we don't lose those students to other jurisdictions because after three or four years of study elsewhere they've made connections and built relationships in those institutions that cause them to decide to actually move permanently to those other jurisdictions and therefore we've lost those people.

11:30

The same thing goes more locally, Madam Speaker, when it comes to our local institutions and colleges such as those found in some of our smaller communities; for example, in Camrose with Augustana college, the deep cuts there. As a result, people are ending up having to travel to larger centres to obtain the education that they want. That, of course, results in harm done to not only the local economy in places like Camrose, but it also means that those individuals lose their roots to that community and are unwilling or have other motivations to live elsewhere. From an economic development standpoint, to be making the cuts that have been made to postsecondary institutions in the province and in particular to our

more rural postsecondary institutions: serious, harmful effects to the long-term economic development of those communities.

I have a real sore spot when it comes to the government's decisions to make cuts to postsecondary institutions. I know that there were some decisions made in Athabasca in particular. Athabasca University is an online university, but there were changes made to allow individuals there on their executive to not have to live in the province. The members of their executive don't have to live there. Of course, the people in Athabasca are hoping to keep Athabasca in the Athabasca University. Even though it's an online institution, most of the people who operated that institution were resident in Athabasca over the history of that university, a very proud history it is. It's one of the most populous colleges of its kind and has students from not only all over the country, but globally it has a significant student population. People in Athabasca are, rightfully, proud of that history and wanted to maintain the roots of the institution in that community by insisting that if you want to be part of the executive of that Athabasca University, you actually had to be resident there. That's being lost, and the whole integrity of the institution is at risk as a result. That's come as a result of budget cuts to postsecondary institutions, in some of our smaller colleges in more rural areas of the province.

Let's be clear. With proper supports postsecondary institutions in the province can be the economic engine. They're a vital component of the economic prosperity that we all seek in this province. If we don't have viable postsecondary institutions which attract students locally to stay here, to study here, obtain their degrees as well as their apprenticeship papers here, then we've lost — there's a gap there that doesn't allow us to maintain the growth that we need to maintain, that we absolutely find essential because the young people are leaving the province instead of staying around to study in Alberta.

I know that students in this province are really unhappy with the developments and the budget cuts, and they've called for immediate changes. I know that the former Premier and our member of the Legislature for Edmonton-North West joined students at the University of Calgary's MacEwan Student Centre to call for immediate changes in the 2021 provincial budget to better the postsecondary institutions' economic positions for Alberta's economic future.

Of course, the calls included a call to reverse the \$690 million in cuts to the postsecondary budget, to freeze student tuition rates for at least the duration of the pandemic, to stop increases to student loan interest rates, and end the move to performance-based funding for schools: all things, Madam Speaker, which address the current concerns that are being faced by postsecondary institutions pandemicwise but also a recognition that the government's direction is antithetical to their desire to promote economic growth in the province by thwarting the ability of universities and postsecondary institutions to attract students by putting barriers in place to their abilities to afford to study here and causing them to look elsewhere for other more affordable places to study and also adding costs by way of student loan interest rates and by causing universities to move to performance-based funding. They all create barriers that cause our students to choose to go to postsecondary institutions elsewhere.

That's a significant component of such pieces of legislation as Bill 74, the Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2021, because the focus is wrong. It's not designed to maintain the attraction for young people to study here. It's something that, on balance, a young person making the decisions as to where to go is deciding to go elsewhere.

Now, a third-year student and member of the Faculty of Arts Students' Association Council said that the budget sends a very

clear message to students that the government wants them to pay more for less. Noa Spivak goes on to say that these budget cuts will not only affect the future of Alberta; they will repel young people who may consider studying and starting their lives here. U of C student Chaise Combs said that students in Alberta already have among the highest debt levels in the country, and this budget will make it worse at the worst possible time, Madam Speaker.

Now, according to Statistics Canada data on the impacts of COVID on youth 49 per cent of postsecondary students lost job prospects because of the pandemic, and those burdens are something that are added on to the higher costs that students are already having to suffer as a result of the budget cuts that this government brought in. It also outlines that students could lose between \$23,000 to \$44,000 in cumulative earnings.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate this morning? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to continue on where my colleague left off and a previous speaker before him. The Edmonton-Rutherford colleague identified a significant challenge with regard to the whole area of apprenticeships and talked at length about that, based on his knowledge of being in universities and an instructor, a professor at that level. Then my colleague just now from Edmonton ...

**Mr. Dach:** McClung.

**Member Ceci:** ... Edmonton-McClung spoke eloquently again about the impacts of previous decisions by this government with regard to Advanced Education budgets and cuts to that budget that have caused significant pressures on students and faculty alike with the reduction of thousands of staff across this province both at the full-time employee level, FTE level, but there are even more people impacted as a result of job-shares and things. Thousands of academics, people supporting the work of academics have been put out of work as a result of reduced budgets to the PSE sector in this province. I think they've done a good job of reviewing those things.

**11:40**

I can tell you, from knowing personally people who work in the PSE sector, have for decades, that they have been shocked by the changes in those institutions. This Bill 74 does not redress any of those things, does not fix any of that. It will continue to be a sector in this province that is struggling as a result of the response or the governance of the UCP era.

I don't know for a fact what the drop in the status or standing of our various prime educational institutions is in this province. I don't know the drop in their both national standing and their international standing, but I do know that since the UCP government has come into play in May of 2019, there has been a large drop in the relative standing of our universities. Notably, U of A has lost where it was as a place where people would say, "You know, I want to go to the best or one of the best universities in the country, Canada," and they would see U of A there, and they would make a decision. "That's where the best research money is, that's where the best instructors, professors, support for researchers is, and that's where I want to go."

Unfortunately, Bill 74 is not making anything better that would raise U of A and U of C and other postsecondaries higher in the standings of what people see as the highest in academic learning, highest in academic support. I said that I know some people who have for decades been involved with universities, and I can tell you that they're not looking at Bill 74 as anything that would fix the problems that have been created.

One thing that really interests me, though, is – I'll just flip to it; it's towards the back of the bill – the minister's advisory council on higher education and skills. I think it's intended to replace the councils that are there, where postsecondary education presidents and others in those PSE institutions get together and they kind of work to understand how to integrate, how to bring together all of the institutions so that they work in a comprehensive, co-operative fashion so that the redundancy, of course, is perhaps addressed by that kind of informed information sharing that they do with each other. But it looks like this new minister's advisory council on higher education and skills is going to be a place where that work that was previously done with administrators and academics who knew their own institutions frontwards and backwards and could talk the same language to each other – it looks like that's going to be replaced now, supplemented, or the minister's ear will be more directed towards the advisory council on higher education and skills.

When you look through that and you look at the various aspects of the formation of that council, you see that it's looking for people to serve on it until at least – so there's a cooling-off period. It tells you the kind of people who have to cool off, is what I understand, you know, whether they're academic staff association people, nonacademic staff association, student organizations, people who are in bargaining at universities, members of the board of public institutions, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It tells you who has to cool off. It doesn't in fact say the kinds of skill sets that the minister is looking to appoint on that council, so I worry that the minister's, you know, direction from his own staff and perhaps his own considerations will be appointing people who have limited knowledge of the real lives of universities and what goes into making universities excellent.

It doesn't say the skill sets that the minister is looking for to appoint on there. It could be anybody. It could be just people who have put their name into the agencies, boards, and commissions secretariat if there's still one of those. We had one of those when we were government. I don't know what the government has anymore. But it could be a person who's interested perhaps in the whole idea of higher learning but who's never been to a university, who's never been to a college or an institution. [interjections] I hear some rumblings from the other side. Maybe they're congratulating that whole idea, that it would be somebody who wouldn't have any knowledge of a university and that that would be somehow a benefit to getting the voice of, you know, the common person there at the table to instruct or give advice to the minister through this council. I'm not sure that's a good way to do these things.

I think you recognize there are skill sets that come with people who have spent their lives or been an administrator across large institutions at our postsecondaries and that they have some ideas about inside knowledge that they believe would improve the whole thing. I think that's a failing of this council as set up in this bill and that will give advice to the minister. I think it would potentially be advice that may not be germane to the current situation with postsecondary education in this province. You know, it's a very complex thing – there are 25 postsecondary institutions plus Banff Centre – to stay current and to stay relevant to people who want to become academics and push forward research and innovation. I'm not sure we need someone giving advice to the minister who's never had any contact, connection with postsecondaries.

The individuals serving on that board, I think, should at least have the skills – and perhaps the minister is going to do further work to identify what those skills he's looking for can be, but it's not in this Bill 74 at this point in time, and it doesn't say that there's going to be any regulations identified subsequent to this bill that would

facilitate all of this. It is bereft of all of that, and I think that's a failing. That is another reason why we need to look further into what advanced education really needs. We understand that the drop in excellence, that is being viewed by the listing of where the U of A is now and where it started off more than two years ago, is significant.

11:50

We know that the cuts have affected all of our institutions, and I think some of them see their change as 5 per cent reductions; others, 11 per cent. I'm of the view – and I think my colleague here talked about a 23 per cent reduction in funding to the U of A. You can't do the same things, obviously. You do different things. From personal knowledge I know that faculties are being put together that weren't put together before. Before there was, you know, an independent faculty of medicine. Now there's medicine, pharmacy, nursing together, and that has caused many people to lose their employment because they work with one faculty and now there's a bunching together or a batching together of back-of-house staff to service all of those various faculties that are together in one area now.

Some people may see that as a positive thing, a more efficient thing, but I can tell you that the faculty, the teachers, the professors who work in those areas, don't see it that way. They see it as not getting the same support and service that they did previously, which has affected their ability to teach and engage with students. They get fewer TAs and markers, so they have to do those things on their own, which pulls back their time, Madam Speaker, from being able to do research and community service, as they are expected to do in addition to instructing.

The changes that have been brought forward by the Minister of Advanced Education in previous budgets have had a negative effect on our postsecondary education, and I don't see in this bill any stepping back from those negative changes and trying to repair what has been damaged in our postsecondary education.

My colleagues talked a lot about the apprenticeship focus in this Bill 74, and I applaud the government for its focus on apprenticeship. I don't believe our government ever put apprenticeship down or thought less of the kind of important flow of support for trade skills.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Member Loyola:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. When it comes to this particular bill and the scenario that we have in front of us, one of the major concerns I have is with the council itself. Of course, as I've expressed in this House before, the transparency with which this government has been naming people to agencies, boards, and commissions is lacking.

It's one of the things that I happen to be very proud of with the NDP government when we were the governing party, where we actually did a very good job of making the process by which people were named to agencies, boards, and commissions a much more transparent process whereby people went through an application process. We reached out. We made it public that people were being sought for specific agencies, boards, and commissions. Albertans felt that there was a real opportunity to make sure that on several agencies, boards, and commissions there was, I would say, a broader number of people that actually had input into the decisions that were being made by these agencies, boards, and commissions.

Of course, this is one of the issues that I have with this particular council and who's going to be named to this council. We've brought this up in debate once before. Of course, the Member for

Edmonton-Rutherford was speaking specifically to how decisions were going to be made with this particular council. I would very much like members opposite to please speak to this particular issue because, as I like to remind myself, a point of view is nothing more than just a view of a point. It's important to have as many perspectives as possible when you're actually dealing with issues. With the issues that this council and that this minister will be attempting to address, it's important that as many perspectives are available as possible, people at the table being able to draw attention to certain matters. This is why it's such an important concern that I have, and of course there are a number of questions in relation to that.

One of the things that is concerning and was brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is: who will be consulted on establishing new apprenticeships? Will there be a regulatory and legal framework and criteria for establishing new apprenticeships? How will the government consult more broadly with the Alberta public on these particular matters?

As we all know, the economy is changing. There are new opportunities that the government can really work on, helping to diversify the economy of Alberta, which Albertans have been concerned with for so many years when it comes to the Alberta economy and how people are actually interacting with that

economy, making sure that people have opportunities. As I've discussed many times in the House, there are so many people that come to Alberta because they're seeking a better opportunity not only for them but for their children. With the current economic crisis that we have in front of us, we see more and more people being concerned about the future of their children and whether Alberta will be able to provide those important economic opportunities for people for generations to come.

As it was discussed when we were debating the previous bill, there are so many people who are actually leaving Alberta, and I'm hearing from people who are concerned with this particular issue, that they're also concerned about the opportunities in relation to the real economic prospects in terms of jobs here in the province of Alberta. I mean, I think that the government has to do a better job of putting hand in hand, having an actual vision for where we want Alberta to go, and that it's important that we have as many perspectives on that as possible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock now strikes 12. The House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

## Table of Contents

Prayers.....	5795
Orders of the Day .....	5795
Government Motions	
Time Allocation on Government Motion 100.....	5795
Division .....	5795
Legislative Assembly Debate on COVID-19.....	5795
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 49   Labour Mobility Act.....	5802
Bill 74   Advanced Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2021 .....	5807

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