



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 1, 2021

Day 121

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)
Nicolaidis, 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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, QC, Clerk
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and
Director of House Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
Committees
Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary
Programs
Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Chris Caughell, Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Jason Copping	Minister of Health
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Mike Ellis	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
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
-------------	--

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

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 1, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

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

Recording:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a statement to make.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. NDP MLAs have taken to Twitter to denounce the government for not sending officials to the COP 26 in Glasgow, the 26th United Nations climate change conference. Now, I understand the NDP was focused on sizzle and not substance in their own climate programming while in government. Former Premier Notley even admitted in a Christmas 2018 interview that she had no idea how many emissions had been reduced by the NDP's deeply unpopular carbon tax. The NDP spent more than \$100,000 and presumably expended thousands of tonnes of CO₂ jetting around to UN climate conferences, presumably signalling their virtue on the topic, and they can't even quantify the results of these gabfests. Reports further indicate that more than 400 private jets will descend on Glasgow for COP 26, injecting 13,000 tonnes of CO₂ into the global atmosphere. How is any of this posturing and preening on the part of the chattering classes helping the environment? It isn't.

The UCP government has a real plan to reduce emissions, and it's already in motion. Since forming government, we have invested in job-creating technologies that will reduce emissions by 120 million tonnes over the next 20 years, with even more to come as additional investments come online. That is the same as the total emissions for the province of New Brunswick. Today Premier Kenney and Minister Nixon are announcing that the Alberta government is using up to \$176 million from the TIER, technology innovation and emissions reduction, system and the federal low carbon economy leadership fund for 16 projects that will cut almost 7 million tonnes of emissions by 2030. This is the same as

eliminating emissions from the electricity used by 4.5 million homes.

The NDP is all talk, but we are putting our money where our mouths are when it comes to addressing climate change.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling

Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: The member will know that the use of proper names under any circumstances is inappropriate. It happened on three occasions during the member's statement. I'm always reluctant to interrupt, as I have heard it happen on a number of occasions, but he, I'm sure, will make the necessary adjustments in the future.

Government Policies

Ms Renaud: You can learn a lot listening to what people say. You can learn a lot by watching what they do. Three years ago, in his acceptance speech, the leader of the UCP said the following to a much-adoring crowd: we understand that in order to be a compassionate, caring province, we must be prosperous first. Since that time every single UCP MLA has done their part to make this ugly, self-serving statement a reality. Since their election the UCP have cut the monthly benefits of tens of thousands of severely disabled Albertans, saying that they wouldn't find it onerous. The UCP cut benefits for the poorest Albertans by slashing income support. They made it worse by removing supplemental benefits that were the difference between having a home or not. They'll tell you that they changed no policies. That's how they mislead. They watched as disabled children, women, and men linger on wait-lists for life-altering supports because there are no new dollars for them. Life on a wait-list can be dangerous.

A recent report from Food Banks Canada shows there's been a 30 per cent increase in food bank usage since 2019, and I've heard nothing from the UCP to address this problem. While all of this damage is happening, the UCP blows millions on useless inquiries, a useless war room, endless expensive reviews, studies; blows through a billion and a half on Trump getting re-elected; and carves out tens of millions from the social service budget to create the Premier's slush fund so that he can dole out money to friends and supporters. The UCP has failed to commit to taking any meaningful steps to eliminate poverty and homelessness. Instead, they crow about sustainability and making positive changes when things get better. Quite frankly, this entire UCP caucus has been a disaster for vulnerable Albertans. Every single one of them supported this disastrous mandate. They're all complicit.

Albertans see what's happening, and they're repulsed. Albertans deserve leaders focused on an inclusive future, unafraid to tackle important issues with compassion. Change is coming.

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

Economic Recovery and Growth

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am excited about what this fall session has for the Legislature as well as for Albertans. Just in the last week we have seen strong legislation that continues to support economic recovery here in Alberta, legislation like the Infrastructure Accountability Act, that furthers Alberta's recovery plan by supporting jobs and economic growth, as well as the Labour Mobility Act, that enables highly skilled, certified workers to bring their expertise to Alberta and meet growing demand. Getting Albertans back to work remains a top priority for Alberta's government. We continue to take action to make this a

reality through programs such as Alberta jobs now and Alberta's recovery plan. These initiatives are already bearing fruit. Stats Canada provided good news once again for Alberta with the third straight month of job growth. Alberta added 19,600 jobs in the month of September, continuing our economic rebound. We've now recovered all of the jobs lost since the beginning of the pandemic.

We continue to see excellent investment in a wide variety of industries across the country. This year we have seen our film sector double in investment, our tech sector continues to multiply, and new momentum in our oil and gas industry is inspiring. Earlier this year we saw one of the most significant proposed investments in our province's history from Dow Chemical. Their announcement of the world's first net zero petrochemical plant shows that Alberta is diversifying our economy and is a global leader in emissions reduction.

Thank you to the companies that continue to support economic recovery here in Alberta. Finally, thank you to Albertans for your resilience and strength as we work together for a better future. Brighter days are ahead of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Agriculture

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a hard season for Alberta farmers. The hot and dry temperatures have made it one of the worst seasons farmers have had to work through. Producers have had some of the lowest yields, many questioning if it was even worth while to harvest some of their fields, and many ranchers and livestock owners were left to decide whether or not to cull their herds. These are difficult and stressful decisions and impact their future, determining whether or not some can remain on the farm. Producers have been here for all Albertans throughout the pandemic, and they deserve a government that will be there for them. However, this UCP government, unfortunately, continues to ignore the calls of farmers and ranchers.

When the summer started to be very hot and dry, I wrote to the minister of agriculture requesting that he make a public emergency plan to support the industry in case of drought. Our request was ignored. In July I called on the UCP to reverse the cuts they made in the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. Instead of listening so that people would be able to receive payments quicker, the minister simply denied that he'd made any cuts at all. Once the UCP finally decided to provide relief, I called on them not to make the continued mistakes they have made through the pandemic in delaying supports. However, the UCP did delay funding, and what they provided was simply inadequate. Farmers and ranchers are still waiting for insurance payouts.

1:40

Throughout this entire growing season, as heat soared over 35 degrees, municipalities across the province declared a state of emergency, but the UCP ignored those calls from municipalities. Alberta's agriculture industry deserves a government that will listen and work with them.

In travelling across the province, I've been continuously amazed and inspired by Alberta's agriculture industry. Agriculture is foundational in Alberta's culture and economy. Agriculture ensures all Albertans are fed and provides jobs across the province. There is a lot of potential and opportunity in the sector. The UCP must do more to ensure the industry can reach its potential, but they also

must simply take a role in leadership now to ensure that in this sector they're able to plan for next year.

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

Diwali

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak to the House about the wonderful celebration of Diwali. Diwali is here, and it's time to celebrate with millions of people around the world. Apart from India, Diwali is widely celebrated in many foreign countries like Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka as well as celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains across the world.

During this festivity lamps are lit and decorated to welcome the goddess Lakshmi, and the amazing celebration is encased through traditional dance, music, food, and generally a time for visiting, exchanging gifts, feasting, and praying. Rangoli decorations, with coloured powdered flour and sand, are very popular on Diwali and auspicious for this occasion.

Diwali is the celebration of the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Being the festival of lights, Diwali is about unity among all and to participate and share happiness together. Many scholars believed that Diwali was celebrated when the return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya took place after he defeated Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who had kidnapped Lord Rama's wife, Sita Maa, symbolizing good over evil.

Seeing the practices and traditions of other Albertans helps to ensure strong social cohesion and fosters great acceptance among our society. To be living in Alberta means the freedom to practise and cultivate diversity and multiculturalism. As a proud and practising Hindu, I am honoured to be able to celebrate with my fellow constituents and Albertans. Festivals like Diwali are vital in promoting a better shared understanding of our shared culture, history, and civilization.

I wish everyone a very happy Diwali. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 Response

Mr. Dang: Throughout this fourth wave and the three waves that preceded it, Albertans have often wondered where their government was. Albertans that were forced to stay home sick or needed to care for a sick loved one are wondering why this government broke their promise for paid sick leave. Small businesses who did the right thing to protect their staff and customers, even at their own expense, are wondering why this government constantly overpromised and underdelivered on the supports they needed to survive this pandemic. Health care workers, who cancelled their vacations, worked overtime in impossible environments, wondered why during a crisis the Premier and his team vanished, abandoning them and their patients, and the answer to all of these groups, after nearly two years of this pandemic, is the same: the UCP simply do not care about you.

This government could have provided paid sick leave, but instead they said that Albertans who accessed emergency supports were lazy, Cheezie-eating cartoon watchers. They could have provided real supports to businesses, but instead, as small businesses struggled, this government used a loophole to get over \$200,000 into their party coffers. They could have supported our health care workers with actual leadership when it was needed; instead, they marketed best summer ever hats and fund raised against vaccine passports. Albertans see this, and that is why this government has zero credibility in the eyes of Albertans, because while they were putting their neighbours and communities first, this government

was doing everything they could to ensure that their interests went first.

Albertans were told to expect a fiscal reckoning, all while this government was taking \$200,000 that should have gone to support deserving small businesses and instead went to support their morally and financially bankrupt political machine. They were smugly selling their hats while our ICUs filled and Albertans lost their lives. They tried to make a quick buck off their ideological opposition to vaccine passports even when they knew that vaccine passports are the most effective tool. I promise that we'll do better in 2023.

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic I have heard many of my constituents' concerns about ICU capacity and surgical timelines across our province. Given the importance of this matter I want to use this opportunity to let them know that they are being heard. I know that our government continues to do everything in its power to ensure that we have sufficient ICU capacity to meet patient demands and to reduce the impact that COVID has had on surgical timelines. During this fourth wave the government had to make the difficult decision to postpone non-urgent scheduled surgeries and create more temporary ICU spaces to keep up with the demand due to the spike of COVID-19 cases across our province.

No one wants to get sick, and no one wants to be ill and not be able to access the medical care they need. This is why I was glad to hear that one of the main priorities of the Health ministry is to permanently increase the baseline ICU capacity in our health system. That work has already begun, to increase this capacity over the next 12 to 18 months as part of the Alberta surgical initiative and the surgical recovery strategy. Even though this measure won't immediately ease the pressure on our hospitals, it is an important plan to protect us from further disturbing surgical capacity at the risk of future waves. It is a measure that will serve Albertans as people keep getting vaccinated and the pandemic gradually changes into an endemic.

I would also like to share that even though the government and AHS had been planning for a possible postponement of up to 75 per cent of all surgeries several weeks ago, they are currently completing nearly two-thirds. I am hopeful that soon our surgery timelines will significantly improve. People need to know that our government will not stop working once the immediate crisis is addressed and that it will continue to work hard for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Environmental Policies

Mr. Schmidt: Over the past two years Albertans have gotten a good look at this government's priorities and values. Albertans treasure the environment, and there is no more Albertan activity than spending time in our beautiful green spaces. But while Albertans have shown that protecting their environment is a priority, this government shows every chance their disdain for the natural beauty of this province.

Albertans see a government that prioritizes selling hats and dodging their responsibilities whenever possible and a government that refuses to act on the environment. Albertans see a government that sneakily lifted protections for the eastern slopes because they prioritize allowing international companies to strip-mine our eastern slopes, treasured by Albertans for generations. Albertans see a government that would rather sell or delist parks than invest in them. Albertans see a government that, when given a choice, would rather

shut down environmental monitoring than ensure worker safety. Albertans see a government whose central environmental policy will allow higher carbon emissions and reduced innovation.

We see a government that will defend and will spend millions on embarrassments like the war room, that has hurt Alberta's international reputation, and the Allan inquiry, that has investigated free speech and spent tax dollars on climate denial materials, all while telling Albertans that they need to pay more to access lands that have been free for over half a century. When given the choice to be a world leader on things like renewable energy or hydrogen, this government chooses, without fail, to delay, deny, and avoid action until forced into it. When given a chance to work directly with people, governments, and organizations internationally, this government stays home, happier to whine than to do the hard things and show leadership.

Albertans deserve a government that shares their values, a government that will protect the spaces that they value, that will show the leadership required to innovate and create jobs and opportunity. They won't get it from the UCP, but in 2023 that will change.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

COVID-19 Response Conflict and Contention

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth is nonpartisan. Since last spring I have asked for an independent, comprehensive public inquiry, including a full cost analysis of the harms of COVID restrictions on children and young adults. Young Albertans are not overwhelming our health care system. We spend about \$23 billion on this system, among the highest per capita in Canada. Why, with this massive amount of money, can AHS only produce ICU beds on a per capita basis that is not even half of the worst of the U.S. states? Trust would increase if AHS was more honest in acknowledging its own failings. Let's give Alberta families and individuals a voice.

Where there is a famine of truth, contention fills the void. Dividing, labelling, compelling, and coercing others destroys trust. Seeking to misrepresent others or twisting their words is wrong. Some make sweeping judgments about others who do not agree with their opinions, framing them as extremists, seeking to vilify them. That is not how things really are. The truth about our neighbours is more complex, more nuanced, each of them possessing unique context and circumstances, all of which can be valued and respected. Mercifully, a loving God views all of us, His children, by our eternal possibilities and in our best possible ways. Conflict is inevitable; contention is a choice. Choosing to do what is right makes us happier and better.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

COVID-19 Vaccines for Children

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, Canadians received some very good news this weekend. The U.S. FDA has approved the use of Pfizer in children aged five to 11, and Health Canada is expected to follow soon. This is the next biggest step forward towards truly putting this pandemic behind us. Parents are overjoyed. Last week I was talking to a mom whose seven-year-old has kidney disease. She can't wait; every second Alberta gets closer to being able to protect children like hers. To the Premier: what specific actions has this government taken to prepare to vaccinate children?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health has risen.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the very important question. The vaccines are continuing to be reviewed by Health Canada, and we'll be looking for input as well from our vaccination committee here in Alberta. We recognize that many Albertans are looking forward to this vaccination, and we're working with AHS in regard to a plan of how we can roll this out very quickly as soon as it receives approval here in Canada and in Alberta.

Ms Notley: We don't want to wait until after approval, Mr. Speaker. If the government wants Alberta kids to get vaccinated, they need to get loud about it. That means working with schools to reach parents with information about the safety and the benefits. More than that, they could start preregistering kids through schools by preparing a robust in-school vaccination program to roll out this fall, yet the government has resisted that idea. Why won't the government commit to an in-school program? Why won't they share information with parents? Why won't they stand up for that seven-year-old who needs his classmates to get vaccinated?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are focused on rolling out vaccines. Actually, that is part of my key mandate, to increase vaccinations within Alberta. In regard to those between five and 11, since launching the Alberta vaccine booking system, any Albertan with an Alberta health care number can be registered online. This means that parents can already register children under 12. Parents can register them now so that their account is ready to book an appointment immediately after vaccines are approved and appointments are publicly announced for this age group. If an Albertan is 12 years or older, they can also book a COVID shot right now for those who have not yet done so.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, these guys are so far behind on managing COVID that we actually have to watch B.C. to prepare for what Alberta will do six to eight weeks later. In that spirit, B.C. is rolling out booster shots to everyone, starting in January 2022; Ontario is set to announce a similar plan this week. This is an important move for preventing our population-level immunity from waning against future variants. To the Health minister: why has Alberta not moved to follow B.C.'s lead? Why is Alberta behind again, and when can we expect to see action?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for that very important question. Our process is actually to not only listen to the national committee but the Alberta advisory committee on immunization. That committee is meeting this afternoon to discuss this very important topic, and I look forward to updating the House and all Albertans in terms of the decision moving forward.

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

COP 26 Climate Change Conference

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, today the eyes of the world are on Glasgow, where world leaders are setting future policy around energy development and climate change, a conversation that is critical to our province's economy. Newfoundland, which also produces oil, sent their Premier; so did Quebec. Other provinces sent their ministers. Even the federal Natural Resources minister,

who the Premier claims he has a good working relationship with, says that Alberta should be there. Why is the Premier absent from a conference of leaders on energy? Is it because he knows he just isn't one?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had a great conversation this morning with the new Minister of Natural Resources to say that we are staying at home in Alberta doing the hard work to move Alberta forward with climate policies that are creating jobs and actually reducing emissions. It's things like increased renewables; geothermal; accelerating emissions-reducing technologies; carbon capture, utilization, and storage; and developing significant hydrogen opportunities as well as critical and rare earth minerals. The oil sands is moving to net zero. We're reducing methane emissions by 45 . . .

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that if Alberta isn't leading the conversation, we will all be left behind. Here's the story we should be telling. As the minister said, Alberta's coal phase-out has been one of the biggest impacts on Canada's total emissions reduction. We're leading renewable energy development in industries moving to net zero by 2050. These and other stories are what international investors need to hear from Alberta. Instead, the last time they heard about Alberta in international investment circles, it was about our attack on a cartoon. Why is nobody there today to talk about the good stuff?

Mrs. Savage: We're taking tangible steps to reduce emissions in Alberta. Just today our minister of environment and the Premier were announcing \$176 million in funding for emissions-reducing technology, funding from the TIER program. Mr. Speaker, this funding is going to things like a hydrogen rail initiative, a solar storage project, a new blue hydrogen hub, pumped hydro energy storage. Instead of being in a global gathering, we're working hard in Alberta to reduce emissions and create jobs.

Ms Notley: Well, instead of being in a global gathering, indeed the Premier is throwing himself a parade for the TIER program to distract from his absence from said global gathering.

While the new projects are good news, let's remember: the rules around that fund itself are a step backwards. Under us the better performers were rewarded; the poorer performers had incentives to get better. Under the UCP companies are only measured against themselves, failing to drive competition, failing to drive down emissions. It's a total bait and switch. When will this government realize they're not fooling anyone and that their environmental ambivalence only jeopardizes jobs in our energy industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's our view that practical and achievable steps include – must include – economic, environment, and social considerations. In 2015 the former NDP government went to Paris and spent \$70,000 sending the former Premier and former climate change minister to Paris. That didn't bring back any jobs or investments. In fact, in 2016 Northern Gateway was cancelled, and Energy East was cancelled one year later, major pipeline projects. We're going to use that \$70,000 to actually reduce emissions and help our industry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Postsecondary Tuition Fees

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is reporting the highest year-over-year increase to postsecondary tuition in Canada. It's not even close. This government has removed the tuition cap at the rate of inflation and then moved to cut nearly \$700 million from postsecondary education. This has backed schools into a corner and forced them to hike tuition and many other fees. None of this helps our students, the pursuit of their careers, and, by extension, Alberta's economic future. Can the minister inform the House exactly how much tuition has increased in Alberta over the last year and why he seems to be okay with that?

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

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sure. I'd enjoy the opportunity to inform the House. In fact, I think I had the opportunity to read this very same article that the member is talking about. One of the things that I think the member missed, however, in that article was that the article pointed to the fact that tuition in Alberta still remains below the national average. I think that this is an important fact when we look at tuition within the context of increases, to know where we are in comparison to other provinces. We're about on par with B.C. and still below the national average at this point.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, this minister's statistics are so out of date, they start to smell bad, quite frankly.

It gets worse as the government has also increased the interest on student loans, and they've done it at a time when Alberta students already carry the highest debt load in Canada. It's gotten so bad that students are dropping out because they can no longer afford to pay for their postsecondary education. Will the minister finally commit to stopping these massive cost hikes to students, block massive tuition hikes at the University of Alberta and across the rest of the province as well?

2:00

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned a moment ago, these aren't my statistics; those were in the same article that the member's talking about, so I'd encourage you to continue to read on and do a little bit more homework. You know, that being said, it's very important that we continue to ensure accessibility within our postsecondary system. It's part of the reason why we've done a number of changes when it comes to student aid. That includes introducing new scholarships. That also includes continuing to fund cost pressures on other scholarships to continue to ensure that students have those financial instruments that are needed. I know some institutions are looking at additional tuition proposals, and we'll be evaluating that.

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand how this government can stand by as students drop out and incur tens of thousands of dollars more in debt. The government froze tuition for several years to bring it down into line with the rest of the country. That's the statistic. We went from having the highest tuition in the nation to amongst the lowest. Then we capped tuition increases as well. Now we have total chaos, with students picking up the tab for this government's massive cuts and ineptitude. Minister, for the record, what's the message your government wants to send to students who are literally dropping out of school because of tuition increases?

Mr. Nicolaides: The message I would like to reinforce is the fact that Alberta's government has created new scholarships to help encourage more students to access postsecondary education. As

well, we've continued to fund for cost pressures in student aid to make sure all Albertans have those opportunities. As well, we created the first strategic plan for Alberta's postsecondary system, the first time in over 15 years, Mr. Speaker. This strategic plan is helping fund new microcredential programs. This summer I was in Lethbridge and had the opportunity to announce \$5.6 million to create new microcredential programs to help Albertans get the skills that they need to succeed.

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

Provincial Police Force Feasibility Study

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, a majority of Albertans already didn't support the UCP's move to a provincial police force, and that was before they knew the hefty price tag that comes with this ridiculous endeavour: up to \$759 million annually, \$200 million in lost federal funding, and \$366 million in transition costs. Can the genius over there who thinks of wasting \$1 billion to create a provincial force no one wants please stand up and explain themselves to Alberta?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As committed, we've released the PWC report on a transition study on provincial police. One thing is clear in that particular report, that if we are to make that particular transition, it would actually be more cost-effective to operate a provincial police compared to what we currently spend on the RCMP. On the models put forward in that particular report, we would spend \$754 million in model A, \$758 million in model B, but today we spend \$783 million on the RCMP.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, the minister is just providing political cover for the Premier. There is so much more to the provincial police force plot. You see, the RCMP is still investigating the Premier's corrupt UCP leadership campaign from 2017. He already removed the Election Commissioner, who was also investigating numerous allegations of voter fraud. Now the Premier has set his sights on the entire RCMP, anything to save his political skin. Can the minister tell this House whether any member of the UCP cabinet or staff have been ...

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

Mr. Sabir: ... questioned by the RCMP in relation to the Premier's leadership campaign? If he doesn't know, will he commit to table that information?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:04.

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, this is the unfortunate thing about the NDP. The Member for Calgary-McCall can call the police and within two minutes he will get a response from the Calgary Police Service. Many of our rural citizens can call the police and sometimes it can take four hours for there to be a police response. I am proud to be that Minister of Justice that is looking into the possibility of once and for all helping our rural communities meet the demand of law enforcement. It should not matter where you live in this particular province; the level of law enforcement service should be the same whether you live in Edmonton or Calgary or in Grande Prairie.

Mr. Sabir: Minister, it's not okay to stop an active RCMP investigation by eliminating the RCMP altogether. I have seen

dozens upon dozens of letters sent to this minister and the Premier telling him to stop this bogus initiative. Municipalities have widely rejected this move. Edson's mayor wrote to the minister and called the whole thing a "smoke and mirrors road show." What does the minister say to the dissenting municipal leaders as the UCP moves to cover its tracks from the past using the power of the Premier's office and a billion dollars of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, this is an NDP that while they were in office did not even acknowledge that rural crime was a thing in our province. You know, I am not surprised. We will deal with the problems that we see on the ground. I have travelled across Alberta listening to municipal leaders, and I am proud to be that Minister of Justice who has always defended the men and women who put on the uniform to serve us. I have been clear that this has got nothing to do with the RCMP officers but more about rural crime.

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

Economic Recovery and Diversification

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy has seen some tumultuous times in recent years, from the opposition's time in government, which drove tens of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs out of the province, to the COVID-19 recession, which caused over 300,000 jobs to be lost in the early months of the pandemic. We've started to see recovery; however, Alberta's recovery plan has led to job growth and diversification of our economy. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation tell the House how many jobs have been created in recent months?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to advise this House that all of the jobs that were lost during the pandemic have been recovered, including 60,000 jobs in the last three months alone. You have all of the economic forecasts from across this country of Alberta leading the pack when it comes to GDP growth and job growth, not just this year but next year as well. We still have a long way to go for everyone across Alberta to feel this recovery, but it's here. The Alberta rebound is real, and our recovery plan is a big part of that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Those are indeed encouraging and reassuring numbers. Our government initiated many measures such as the most ambitious capital plan in provincial history and numerous strategies to grow our economy. Can the same minister tell the House what analyses are saying that the recovery plan will do to boost economic growth in Alberta?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, not only are we seeing the strong rebound with energy prices around \$85 WTI, natural gas prices around \$5 – that's awesome for our traditional part of our economy – we're also seeing cutting-edge projects: hydrogen facilities; cutting-edge, first-of-their-kind-in-the-world petrochemical facilities right here in Alberta. We even have the president of Dow Chemical on international news talking about the policy framework of Alberta being the model for the world when it comes to these types of cutting-edge investments. There's a strong rebound coming for Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Clearly, the rest of Canada sees how Alberta is an economic powerhouse. Our recovery plan included

several different stages for diversification of Alberta's economy. Since the plan was announced, we've seen major announcements from major multinationals about investing in Alberta. Can the minister provide an update on major new investments in Alberta and any further updates on diversification in Alberta?

The Speaker: I might just remind the member. That sounded an awful lot like a preamble and not as much like a question.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you to the member for that question, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to those major investments, we've seen major international technology companies – Mphasis, Infosys – announce their big presence here in Alberta, almost 2,000 jobs between them, plus RBC with their innovation hub. Huge growth in the tech sector for Alberta. That's diversification we've been talking about for decades in this province, and it's happening right now in our communities. On top of that, venture capital is breaking records. Starting in 2018, the last year of the former government, they only had \$100 million of venture capital. Fast forward to this year, we're on track for about \$500 million of venture capital right here in Alberta.

Workplace Conduct of Ministers and Staff

Member Irwin: Questions about how the Premier and a number of government cabinet ministers handled allegations of sexual harassment and workplace abuse continue to go unanswered by members on that side of the House. The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation claims to have no knowledge that his chief of staff came forward with allegations of abuse and then was subsequently fired. A chief of staff is the key adviser, confidante to the minister. It's simply unbelievable that that minister wouldn't have known what was happening in his own office, and if that's the case, that's troubling in itself. I didn't get an answer last week, so I'm going to try again. How could the minister stand by and do nothing while his most senior staff and trusted political adviser suffered?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Status of Women.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, sexual harassment is detestable, it's despicable, and it has no place in this workplace or any other workplace in Alberta. Period. Full stop. End of sentence. Any employee who believes that they've witnessed or personally experienced sexual harassment is strongly encouraged to bring their concerns forward so that appropriate action can be taken and support can be offered. That includes in this government and its political staff.

Member Irwin: Given that, we'd sure love to hear from the minister on this one.

Last week I asked questions about why Bernardo, the former UCP staffer accused of sexual harassment, was acting as legal counsel to the Alberta Health Services Board. It's a troubling appointment given that a cooling-off period applies to all political staff. He had been a senior adviser to the Minister of Health. The current minister said as of last week that Bernardo was no longer in that critical role within the AHS Board, so can the minister tell the House exactly when it was that Mr. Bernardo was pulled from his duties within AHS? Was it only after allegations of sexual harassment again surfaced in the media?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated last week, I was informed by both the AHS CEO and the AHS Board chair that the individual in question would no longer be working on AHS files while the serious matter of sexual harassment was being addressed. In regard to the issue of the potential concerns about the Conflicts of Interest Act, the staff raised this issue with the office of the Ethics Commissioner. I've been informed that due to privacy I could not be advised in terms of whether there are any issues, but I trust that the Ethics Commissioner will deal with this accordingly.

Member Irwin: Some of the workplace abuse concerns brought forward centred directly on the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. It's reported that he yelled at a staffer to the point at which she no longer felt safe in the workplace, and as of today that staffer, shamefully, has since been fired and the minister remains in his cabinet post. Could anyone on that side of the House please tell us whether an investigation into the abusive habits of that minister has been launched, and if not, why not?

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, we're not here to debate the private, personal, consensual relationships of members of this Chamber. More importantly, sexual harassment has no place in our society or any workplace. As I said last week, we will initiate and we have initiated an independent review of human resources policies for political staff, ensuring that processes are clear and that all staff are fully aware of those policies and procedures.

Jobs Now Program

Ms Renaud: St. Albert small businesses, like others across the province, are fighting to survive, and this government is failing to help, from the mismanagement of the COVID pandemic to the disaster that was the third instalment of the SMERG program. Now I'm hearing from owners that this government has delayed the jobs now program without warning. Applications were to reopen September 16. That was over six weeks ago; they still haven't. To the minister. This government has failed to get critical funding into the hands of Alberta businesses. How long will the jobs now program be delayed, and when will businesses be able to apply?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. None of that is true. The fact is that when we launched the Alberta jobs now program in May of this year – by the way, \$370 million, the largest jobs program in the history of this province and the largest in this country. Now that we're ready and excited to be launching very soon the second tranche of the Alberta jobs now program, we're working with employers and being able to amend some of the criteria so we can make sure that more of these supports can get to those employers and continue to help them create jobs in this economy.

Ms Renaud: So much spin.

Given that on Friday I stood with Laura Rogerson, owner of Breadlove in St. Albert, who waited over five months to receive SMERG payment and given that in September she was also crushed to find out that the jobs now program was postponed indefinitely and given that Breadlove expanded its business in December 2019 and she was unable to staff up before COVID hit, the jobs now program could be that help that cash-strapped businesses need to staff up, especially going into the holiday season. Minister, can you guarantee that the jobs now program will be available to businesses like Breadlove by the end of the week?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, when the process began, in May, there were 2,700 applications that were received by the ministry for the first tranche of the Alberta jobs now program. As I said, we're excited. We've been working for months now, since July really, both my office and the previous Minister of Labour and Immigration, working with employers on getting feedback on the current criteria and how that criteria can be amended to make sure we get more of this money into the hands of those job creators.

Ms Renaud: Small businesses don't trust this government. Given that the delays of SMERG payments, the failure of a proper rent subsidy, the lack of eviction protection, and more have led to businesses closing permanently in the second, in the third, and now the fourth wave and given the businesses that were able to survive no longer trust this government to deliver in their province, will the minister stand in this House, apologize to business owners and their employees, go to albertasfuture.ca and look at some real measures they could implement to actually support businesses and the broader economy?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, none of that is true, and we're not going to take lessons from a party that would have had all these businesses shut for the entire pandemic. We've been working with these employers to get feedback on how the criteria could be amended to make sure that the second tranche this fall and any future tranches of the Alberta jobs now program continue to get their feedback and be amended to make sure that more of this money gets in the hands of those job creators, gets more Albertans back to work. This is a critical part of our Alberta recovery plan, and we're excited to soon be announcing that second tranche.

Canadian COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination COVID-19 Restrictions Exemption Program

Mr. Loewen: The Premier stated, quote, we've been very clear from the beginning that we will not facilitate or accept vaccine passports as they in principle contravene the Health Information Act and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, yet in question period last Thursday your Health minister said that your government "had always intended to work with the federal government" to facilitate a national vaccine passport. To the Premier: are you providing Albertans' private health information to the federal government, and does this policy flip-flop have anything to do with the \$1 billion the Trudeau Liberals promised all provinces willing to implement their vaccine passport?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the comments that I made last week – and if I misspoke, my apologies to the House – what I was speaking to was that our government had indicated that we would actually work with the federal government in regard to passports for international travel. But as the hon. member well knows, and as indicated in the House numerous times, we moved to an endemic phase too early. We had a rise in the cases. We needed to address that, so we put in place a proof-of-vaccination system, the REP, which is very important. That system is working, and cases are coming down.

Mr. Loewen: Given that in his vaccine passport flip-flop the Premier indicated that vaccines equal freedom and given that Albertans have now spent a second Thanksgiving abiding by lockdown restrictions on gatherings in spite of 86 per cent of eligible Albertans having received at least the first dose and given that my constituents are more concerned about their freedoms than ever before, to the Premier.

Ontario has announced detailed plans that do not rely on 100 per cent vaccinations to phase out vaccine passports. If the purpose of the vaccine passport is to increase vaccination rates, what is the target vaccination rate?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of the REP program is really to protect Albertans and to decrease the tremendous impact that the fourth wave had on our health care system. I want to take this moment to thank all the health care workers for the tremendous job they're doing in stepping up to protect Albertans. The numbers still remain high. Although the trends are good and the numbers are coming down – hospitalizations, ICU – we are still at a much higher level than we have been in normal times. We need to continue to focus on ensuring we bring those numbers down, and then we can have a conversation about what happens next.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the Premier has indicated that the government's emergency restrictions, including vaccine passports, are intended to ease the shortage of ICU beds, yet the Health minister said to the Assembly just last Thursday that, quote, capacity was sufficient to respond to the fourth wave, and given that, to quote the Health minister again, "the numbers are coming down," to the Premier: what percentage of ICU usage does Alberta need to hit before this government will lift emergency restrictions, including vaccine passports?

2:20

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank health care professionals, AHS, and everyone across the province who stepped up to be able to address the fourth wave. Quite correct. As indicated last week, we had sufficient capacity, but that sufficient capacity was because of the tremendous work that all Albertans have done in following the rules set by the chief medical officer of health and stepping up to get vaccinated. Now, as I indicated before, ICU rates remain incredibly high. We need to focus on the rules and increase vaccinations, at which point in time we can look forward. That's part of my mandate in terms of contingency planning, and I look forward to actually speaking more to the House and members about that in the future.

Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant Program

Mr. Nielsen: Last week our caucus asked the Jobs, Economy and Innovation minister about some of the outrageous reasons that some of the over 4,600 small businesses had their small and medium-sized enterprise relaunch grant applications denied. The minister didn't answer, so let's ask the associate minister of red tape: is the minister aware that numerous small-business owners were denied after waiting months for access to critical funding to help them deal with the third wave because of ridiculous stipulations and red tape, and if so, what is she doing to fix this ridiculous mess?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we've processed over 120,000 small-business requests for the relaunch grants through the numerous iterations of that program. Right now we're working through – and we have followed up with every single one of those 4,600 businesses that that member has referenced, asking for additional information. Sometimes it may just be a matter of an account number that doesn't process, or we need further information on their business. We're asking all those businesses – and members of this Chamber, if you have information on those businesses, bring it forward to us. We're processing them as fast as we can. We can't hand out money if we don't have all the information.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, given that Tracey, who owns an aesthetician's shop, was denied simply for using the wrong Internet browser and was unaware she needed to refile and given that when she contacted the ministry, she was told that it was just too late, to the minister: does she agree that Tracey should be denied not on merit but simply that your web portal didn't work with the browser she was using, and if not, then why wasn't she allowed to correct it and reapply?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first that I have learned of this instance. I'll gladly look into this matter further if that member has the contact information or wants to make an introduction. Happy to do a follow-up. We have processed the vast majority of these applications within 10 days, over 120,000. This program has issued over \$700 million of supports to small businesses. We want to get every single one of those businesses that deserves the support out to them as fast as we can. I'll gladly look into this matter with the member.

Mr. Nielsen: Given that another issue that many businesses reported being denied over was unrealistic timelines to turn documentation in and given that Meghan, an owner of a fitness studio, was given only three days to provide complex accounting information after waiting months to hear from the government and given that she submitted the required paperwork within the day it was required but was still denied because her submission didn't fall within business hours, to the associate minister of red tape. Small-business owners work so hard. Why doesn't the government understand that this is why they're wrapping red tape around funding to support small businesses that they need to get through this pandemic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to that member. We'll gladly work through these issues as they come. This program was done in real time to support businesses. Gladly follow up if there are any issues that are out there. This is why we have question period. This is why we have our MLAs at constituency offices. Gladly work with the member to make sure we get to the bottom of all of these if they haven't received a satisfactory response from our ministry. Again, over 120,000 businesses have received support, over \$700 million. Gladly work through these last 4,000 to make sure that we have satisfactory answers for them.

Paid Sick Leave during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms Gray: The Premier's best summer ever is behind us, and thankfully the resulting fourth wave of COVID-19 appears to also be slowing although it's not over yet, and responsible leaders shouldn't rule out the possibility of further COVID variants and future waves of sickness and death. Given that, why is this UCP government still offside with so many other provinces when it comes to paid sick leave, one of the main policies that can reduce workplace transmission? By ensuring that those who are ill can actually afford to stay home while sick, we can reduce the spread. To the minister of labour: why does Alberta still not have a paid sick leave policy?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, look, I apologize. I will have to get back and have help to provide an answer to the member in the future. I apologize. I'm unprepared for giving that answer, but I will commit to giving her an answer on this.

Ms Gray: Given that this year in March Ontario introduced paid sick leave, in April B.C. introduced paid sick leave, in May Manitoba and Saskatchewan introduced paid sick leave, all while this UCP government was preparing to incorrectly declare the pandemic over, why has the Premier and his government still not brought in the simple, the obvious, and the required thing, a paid sick leave policy? Albertans are not interested in excuses. They're not interested in failed ideology. They are looking for paid sick leave now. They want to be able to slow the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As discussed in this House many times, when the question in regard to paid sick leave – this is something that we actually take a look at, where the spread is occurring. At this point in time the spread is actually coming down. We see that across the province, and we see that also within our workplaces. As well, the workplace dynamic has changed with the vaccinations. We continue to assess the need for policies such as paid sick leave, but at this point in time it doesn't appear that it's actually necessary.

Ms Gray: Given that that answer was ridiculous and that Albertans know that the real reason this government refuses to introduce paid sick leave is because the UCP is fundamentally antiworker even when people's health is on the line and when workers' lives are on the line, will the new minister start his tenure as minister of labour on the right foot, demand that his colleagues around the UCP cabinet table finally set aside their mindless opposition to a policy that will help Alberta reduce COVID-19 spread and get back on track? Will you demand paid sick leave?

Mr. Shandro: None of that is true at all. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with workers as well as employers to make sure that everybody has the supports they need throughout the pandemic. With respect, to the member: not true at all. But we will continue to make sure that everybody has the opportunities that they require throughout the pandemic, and I'd point out as well that we've had many opportunities to work with labour and both unionized and non-unionized workers to provide them with the supports that they need throughout this pandemic.

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

Economic Recovery and Labour Supply

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has gone through tough economic times since 2014 due to the oil price crash, four years of devastating NDP policies, and the green left's fight to land-lock our resources. Our economy was beginning to rebound in late 2019, only to have the pandemic take hold and stall that progress, but now it looks like the rebound is back. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: what is the economic outlook for our province in the months ahead?

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

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing a strong rebound in particular for our energy industry, with \$85 WTI, \$5 natural gas. In the last three months alone 60,000 jobs were created here in our province. That means that all the jobs that were lost from this pandemic have now been recovered. We still have a long way to go for a full economic recovery across Alberta, but the beginning is there, particularly when you look at the cutting-edge hydrogen and

petrochemical facility recently announced for our province. Lots of reasons to be excited about the future of our province.

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

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for his answer. Given that there is a labour shortage in many of our industries and given that this is an issue that many jurisdictions across the world are grappling with and given that there will be more jobs needed to fill our economy as it continues to grow, to the same minister: what is the government doing to address these labour shortages, and when do you expect this to subside?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this goes to the strength of Alberta's recovery, the fact that we're actually seeing labour shortages in many industries, from hospitality to construction to oil field services. There are jobs across Alberta right now. We're expecting that this last quarter of 2021 is going to be strong in the job recovery side. When it comes to the jobs of the future and making sure we have that workforce, we're working with our Advanced Education ministry on their 2030 strategy. We did the \$370 million jobs now program. We're also looking at immigration reform as well to make sure Alberta has the talent to fill these jobs that are being created right now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that economic diversification is a large component of Alberta's recovery plan and given that this plan is working, with many businesses investing in diverse industries such as Dow and their plan to make their Fort Saskatchewan plant the world's first net zero carbon emissions petrochemical plant, to the same minister: how is Alberta's diversification plan going, and what does this mean for the future of Alberta's economy?

2:30

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, you have to love Alberta's energy industry. When you throw a curveball at them, they learn how to hit it. In this situation here you've got cutting-edge hydrogen projects in Alberta, a petchem facility, the first of its kind, Dow Chemical's president talking about the policy of Alberta being the way for the world to go forward. That's good news for Alberta for its diversification and the strength of its energy industry long term. On top of that, tech sector growth: breaking records. You've got Edmonton for the first time in the top 50 in all of North America plus with Calgary breaking into the top 20.

Oil and Gas Well Site Reclamation

Mr. Schmidt: Due to prices being at multiyear highs, Alberta oil and gas producers are, according to analysts, flush with cash. Unfortunately, due to pressures from international investors, this doesn't translate into jobs for Albertans as it has in the past. Instead, companies are investing their cash in share buybacks and dividends to foreign shareholders. However, there is an opportunity to create jobs for Albertans that would benefit landowners and the environment, which is the cleanup of abandoned and orphaned wells. Why does this government fail to set the right incentive for companies to do this critical work?

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

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not a phenomenon that's restricted to Alberta. Global internationals are doing the same

thing. Whether it's Chevron or Shell or Total or Exxon, they're all using investments for share buyback, and that's no different in Alberta. But when it comes to cleaning up abandoned oil and gas wells, I will point out that the NDP were in government for four years, and they did zero, squat, diddly, nothing on liability management. Within one year we brought forward a program for liability management. The NDP did nothing.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that we didn't have \$85-a-barrel oil when we were in office and given that last month the minister gave the industry a free pass by stating that she doesn't expect the oil price spike to increase cleanup spending but that now the prices are good and companies have the cash on hand, they should be compelled to invest and create well-paying jobs for Albertans and clean up their liabilities and given that Sara Hastings-Simon from the University of Calgary said that, quote, if we're relying on future income 20 years from now, that seems wholly inadequate, end quote, why is the minister squandering this opportunity to create jobs and address liabilities? Why does she think Albertans are better served by share buybacks?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the summer of 2020, when we brought in our liability management framework that required companies to do an annual minimum spend, it was in the middle of a pandemic. Oil had hit negative. We brought in the biggest action of any government in Alberta history to focus and to clean up these wells. For four years the NDP did nothing, and during those four years over 70,000 wells transferred from stronger companies to lesser financially stronger companies, which has led to the problem that we're dealing with today. They were not paying attention to a problem that . . .

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

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the minister just admitted that she will refuse to address the problem in the future and given that in July the Premier brought together producers to urge them to turn profits into more spending, given that well cleanup seems like the logical solution as international investors don't want to see their investments in new capacity and would likely be punished by capital markets for doing so, can the minister confirm whether the Premier offered well cleanup as a critical component of Alberta's economic future, and if he did, can she explain why seemingly no producers have listened to her boss and taken real steps to address the problem?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, we've brought in a liability management framework that is requiring companies to clean up, an annual minimal spend. It's like a mortgage. Each year it'll be paid down. We actually have companies in Alberta that have committed to zero by 2040; i.e., as in that they will have zero inactive wells; it will all be cleaned up by 2040. I'm challenging other companies to follow that ESG example because we have to do more to clean up. The industry is doing it themselves, and we're bringing in regulations to make sure it happens.

Drug Overdose Prevention

Ms Sigurdson: More than a thousand Albertans died of preventable drug poisonings in the first eight months of 2021. At

this rate this year will be the deadliest year ever. All these deaths are preventable, and this appalling death toll is the direct result of the UCP refusing to listen to health care professionals and refusing to make evidence-based decisions. The associate minister has held this file for more than a hundred days. Why hasn't he abandoned the deadly failure of his predecessor's approach?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, that's really rich from the member opposite, who sat in this House for four years with a government that couldn't even admit that we had an opioid problem, and then they had a single-minded solution to this: they thought giving everyone a naloxone kit was the solution to the problem. They wanted to stick their heads in the sand, and I guess they found God because they're praying it will go away. Well, it hasn't.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that when we were government we expanded the harm reduction model manyfold and this government is doing the opposite, given that it's been five months since the government said that they would open two new supervised consumption services in Calgary, and given the government has signalled that they plan to open another site in Edmonton, will the minister tell the House where these locations are, and when will they open? If he can't, clearly he needs to do more work. Will he report back to the House tomorrow and tell us where the locations are? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. That government spent millions on a one-pillar failed approach in dealing with this crisis. As I have indicated before in the past, this is a multipronged approach that requires many ways in order to fix this sort of problem. It requires safe consumption sites, absolutely, but it also requires recovery-oriented systems of care. Why do the members opposite want to keep people in a state of misery? Why do they not want to help people out of the illness of addiction? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that if the associate minister finally realized what the rest of the world had figured out decades ago, that supervised consumption services save lives, and given that Albertan families are losing loved ones every single day in communities all across our province, does the minister have a plan to expand access in Alberta's other urban centres, or is he content to lose more than four people who are dying of a preventable death every single day?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I suggest the members opposite actually hit the streets, because I have been on the streets. I have spent over a decade on the streets of Calgary. If anybody understands people with addiction, it's the people on this side. I'm going to say this again: we want to help people from their addiction. It is an illness. Why do the members opposite want to keep people in a perpetual state of misery and suffering? It makes no sense to us, and it makes no sense to the people of Alberta. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Labour Supply in Southern Alberta

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, while we try to address the matter of keeping people safe from COVID, unintended consequences are rising. Upcoming labour shortages in multiple sectors in southern Alberta are a reality. Unfortunately, one of these shortages in remote areas is health care. We need all hands on deck in order to

be able to navigate through this pandemic. To the Minister of Health: can you update this House on what our shortfall numbers are in southern Alberta and what the plan is to address this shortfall?

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much to the hon. member for that very important question and your concern for health care workers in southern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government is committed to ensuring that Albertans have equitable access to health professionals no matter where they live. We've made significant investments to protect rural health care and recognize the unique challenges rural communities face in recruiting staff and providing care. Alberta's government is spending about \$90 million this year to address rural physician recruitment and retention, including southern Alberta. This includes providing financial incentives, offering rural medical education programs, and \$9 million for the Rural Health Professions Action Plan. We continue to work on this . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Low German Mennonites make up a large portion of our labour force in southern Alberta and given that a majority of them would rather leave to go back to Mexico than take the vaccine and given that this loss in labour could be as high as 30 per cent in my riding alone, to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what plans are in place to deal with this massive shortage before spring planting?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.
2:40

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to commend the member opposite for all of his advocacy work when it comes to agriculture issues, especially in southern Alberta. And yes, this is a very important one. There are so many temporary foreign workers in southern Alberta, and it's something that is obviously important to the ag community and something that we want to work on with them so that we can make sure that come next seeding, we'll have the workforce available to not just get the crops in the ground but also have so many different types of investments into our agriculture sector so that it can contribute to our GDP and do what they do best, which is produce high-quality, amazing food for families around the world.

The Speaker: The Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that labour shortages being faced by southern Alberta are not just from vaccine mandates but also from the mandatory MELT training and the cost of workers and given that we are also seeing long-haul companies poaching our agriculture labour force, leaving a shortage of qualified class 1 drivers, to the Minister of Transportation: what is this government doing to address this, and will the 500 training squads that the government has offered with the driving back to work program be enough?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the hon. member for that question. Mr. Speaker, the driving back to work program is in the second phase of applications. It's a very successful program aimed at getting unemployed Albertans back into the workforce. Following phase 1 training, 249 Albertans earned their class 1 licence. We know that we have a looming labour shortage of almost 3,600 positions in the trucking industry. The driving back to work grant

will relieve the burden facing trucking companies and provide Albertans with good-paying jobs.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In just a few seconds we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

Statement by the Speaker

Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Campaign

The Speaker: However, I beg your indulgence for a moment. I would like to make note that it is the first of November. There is a poppy box located in my office . . . [interjection] Order. Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will come to order.

There is a poppy box located in my office. Should you need a poppy, bring any bill that you would like to pay for your poppy as I will be taking IOUs for anyone who shows up without such bills. It is important that our poppy box is the most generous in Alberta.

In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give oral notice of Bill 79, the Trails Act, sponsored by the Minister of Environment and Parks.

As well, I also rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 103, sponsored also by the Minister of Environment and Parks. Motion 103 reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize that pursuant to the Alberta Senate Election Act over 1.1 million Albertans participated in the October 18, 2021, election of nominees for the Senate of Canada;
- (b) congratulate the three candidates who received the greatest number of votes – Pam Davidson, Erika Barootes, and Mykhailo Martyniuk – and recognize these candidates as Alberta's nominees for the Senate of Canada, and;
- (c) call on the Prime Minister to respect the democratic decision of Albertans by recommending to Her Majesty the Queen that two of these nominees be summoned to the Senate of Canada to fill Alberta's two vacancies.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Bill 78

Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and request leave to introduce Bill 78, the Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021.

The Alberta Housing Act outlines the rules and the requirements for the provisions of affordable housing in our province. The amendments in this bill will enable the Alberta government to pursue key initiatives under the stronger foundations of Alberta's 10-year affordable housing strategy, which I released earlier today. The amendments lay the groundwork for improving and expanding the affordable housing system to address the demand and improve access for Albertans in it.

I hereby move first reading of Bill 78, the Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 78 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling today. Pursuant to section 46(2) of the Conflicts of Interest Act, C-23 of the 2000 revised statutes of Alberta there are six requisite copies of the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner covering the period April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act, the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis annual report 2020-21; pursuant to the Securities Act, the Alberta Securities Commission 2021 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, points of order. At 2:04 the hon. the Member for Calgary-Hays and the Minister of Municipal Affairs rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Referring to Party Matters

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(l), “introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly.” One of those practices and precedents is asking questions about government business. As you know well – and I know it because you’ve actually told us a number of times – the business of a political party is not the business of government, and a big part of what – I don’t have the Blues in front of me; I apologize for that – I remember the Member for Calgary-McCall asking and saying was about party activity rather than government business. I would respectfully ask that you instruct that member to withdraw those comments.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m afraid the member opposite, without the benefit of the Blues, is completely incorrect. During this question period there was a question about government policy, specifically the government policy to do with removing the RCMP and installing an Alberta police force. I submit to you that this is not a point of order; it was a question about government policy during which matters that are on public record and numerous articles have been written were raised, asking how they may inform government policy. I suggest that this is not a point of order.

The Speaker: I’m prepared to rule on the point of order. I do have the benefit of the Blues, where the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the minister is just providing political cover for the Premier. There is so much more to the provincial police force plot. You see, the RCMP is still investigating the Premier’s corrupt UCP leadership campaign from 2017. He already removed the Election Commissioner, who was also investigating numerous allegations of voter fraud. Now the Premier has set his sights on the entire RCMP, anything to save his political skin. Can the minister tell this House whether any member of the UCP cabinet or staff have been . . .

A point of order was called.

. . . questioned by the RCMP in relation to the Premier’s leadership campaign?

I know that there are many clever ways for a member to make a question about party business government business; however, that was not the case in today’s question when according to chapter 11, page 510, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*: “concern internal party matters, party or election expenses.” I am uncertain how the question asked had anything to do with government policy, so the Opposition House Leader, as she did last week so eloquently, could apologize and withdraw.

2:50

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.
Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills

Bill 215 Seniors Advocate Act

[Adjourned debate October 25: Mr. Rowswell]

The Speaker: The hon. members for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and St. Albert: you both caught my eye there. I’m not sure which – the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and support concurrence of the committee’s recommendation of Bill 215, Seniors Advocate Act. You know, it’s been a while, actually, since we talked about this particular piece of legislation. First of all, I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Riverview for bringing this piece of legislation forward. I think it’s vitally important. I think it would have been incredibly important before COVID, before any of us anticipated what the pandemic would do and what it would teach us, but I think it’s even doubly so now.

I wanted to point out one thing. You know, I used this information in a debate before we broke for the summer, and I talked a lot about a book that I had read. Oddly enough, we had a conference a little while ago of PAC, so that was public accounts committees and members from across the country. We had that a little while ago, and Alberta played host. It was done virtually this year, unfortunately, but one of the keynote speakers was the author of the book that I’d used actually to formulate some of the debate that I had engaged in before we broke. That was André Picard, who is a well-known writer, journalist, who really focuses on health. His book, the book that I was referencing, is titled *Neglected No More*.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Some of the ideas that I will again talk about are from that book, but I encourage all members that if you have not read this book – it’s not a long one – it’s incredibly informative, and it gives a really great history of some of the work that’s been done around seniors over decades and specifically looking at what has happened during COVID. I think it would give all members a really good frame as we debate issues that relate to seniors. I think we say this over and over in this place, that seniors are incredibly important, they built this country, we stand on their shoulders, their numbers are growing

and will continue to grow. So I think it's incumbent on every single one of us to learn what we can about what it is that they need and what we need to do to pass the best legislation possible to ensure that they have the supports that they need.

You know, one of the things that the author of that book, *Neglected No More*, talked about – and I think we've seen numerous articles about it. I'm sure we have all talked about it. We certainly talk about it every time there is a briefing with the chief medical officer of health and we hear about the horrific numbers of people that have died over the last 24-hour period or the people that have been reported to have died. What we have learned is that in our country – and Alberta is no exception – what they're projecting is that between 80 and 81 per cent of all deaths, of all COVID deaths, have been people in long-term care or supported care facilities.

Now, that is something that we should not just quote and shrug our shoulders and move on to the next point of debate. This stat, this statistic should be something that horrifies us, that absolutely horrifies us and that stops us in our tracks and makes us do everything that we can to amend every piece of legislation that comes across our desk or every opportunity that's presented to us to make a case to make things better for our seniors and for vulnerable people that live in long-term care or assisted living or other care facilities. And they are not just seniors. I would like to remind this House and everybody sitting in here that it is not just vulnerable seniors that live in long-term care.

Sadly, what we are seeing increasingly because of the dismal state of affordable housing and affordable housing with wraparound supports for people with very complex needs or very complex disabilities: it is not just seniors that are living in these long-term care facilities or other care facilities. It is very often people that have very complex injuries, whether it's a traumatic brain injury or some other physical disability. Perhaps it's a spinal cord injury. They have very complex disabilities, and they're unable to go anywhere else, so they are surrounded very often by people who are seniors. They don't have a lot in common. Often there is an element of dementia that the other people, the other residents have, so as we talk about long-term care facilities and we talk about care homes and assisted living and the entire spectrum of support, it's really important to understand that it's not just seniors, but it is primarily seniors.

We know that between 80 to 81 per cent of all deaths during COVID have been people that have died living in these facilities. The reason that I'm spending so much time talking about this and bringing this up is for this very reason alone. If there were no other reasons except the stat that I just talked about, that would support the importance or underline the importance of independence with a Seniors Advocate.

I cannot stress this enough, the importance of a Seniors Advocate. The situation that we have right now is again one of the very short-sighted things that the UCP did quickly after forming government. They were looking to slash and burn wherever they could, and they did everything that they could, in my opinion, to prevent the advocate from being independent and then just got rid of it, amalgamated it with Health.

Now, what that does is that it removes any kind of independence from that advocate, and for me to just say that – I'm not even going to talk about the fact that the UCP appointed an insider. Her name is Janice Harrington, who was the previous ED, I believe, of the political party. So to suggest that there's nothing to see here – nothing to see here – complete independence is ridiculous. Nobody buys it. It's just ridiculous. The fact that this government continues to say that is a little bit mind-blowing.

In any event, the importance of an independent advocate is vital. It is something that we could all easily make happen in this place and

then pat ourselves on the back for it. You know, whenever you would look through sort of federal information about advocates, Seniors Advocates, Alberta used to be lumped in with three other provinces that actually were pointed to as such a good example of independence as it relates to seniors' issues. I think it was Newfoundland and Labrador, British Columbia, and New Brunswick. Alberta used to be in this really select group of having an independent Seniors Advocate. We no longer do because apparently the UCP government decided that wasn't important enough, to invest in an independent office to be there to do the things that a Seniors Advocate does.

Now, let me tell you very quickly about what some of those things are in case you've forgotten. I think one of the most important things an independent advocate or – let's be honest – any advocate would do is to really sort of summarize a lot of the caseworker inquires that they receive, because very often you'll see themes. You'll get calls from all over the province, and they will identify different issues and themes. A really great advocate can consolidate that information and then pass it forward in a nonpartisan, independent way to the government to say: here's what I'm hearing; here's what I would suggest you do in order to fix these things.

Now, the problem with a non-independent or, you know, I would say politically motivated advocate is that that's not what you get. They are not free from government influence. They are not free from the influence of the lobbyists that have the government's ear. They are not free to say all of the things that they need to say.

I think we saw a really great example of that recently when the disability advocate appeared before the Families and Communities Committee to present their report. Of course, as all members will know, in the legislation around the disability advocate there is a component that requires a report to the Legislature. It requires the advocate to talk about the work that they had done, the scope of the work that they had done, the casework, and then talking about going forward and what are the things that should be happening.

Now, unfortunately, what happened in that meeting is that we saw an advocate that really was clearly not free to say all of the things that that advocate wanted to say. Strangely enough, that advocate is now gone and is about to be replaced. That'll be interesting to see what happens there. But when given the opportunity to say so, he did. What that advocate wanted was to be able to present all of the recommendations that had been brought forward to the Ministry of Community and Social Services so that all members of this place could hear the recommendations, hear the rationale behind those recommendations, and then make decisions accordingly, but that was stopped. That was stopped by the government members because this is not an independent office.

3:00

Now, that might not sound like a lot, but it is. If you ever want to truly solve problems as government members, if you ever really want to understand the scope of the problem and create solutions that will work, you need to listen to people who are on the front lines, that have the best information about what is happening and what needs to change in order to fix the problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to join the debate on concurrence? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few thoughts on the matter of concurrence to debate Bill 215, the Seniors Advocate Act. First of all, I want to thank my friend from St. Albert for her thoughtful comments in this matter and actually build on them. She and I have the pleasure to serve on the Public Accounts Committee, and we both actually attended the keynote speech that was given by André Picard, who recently wrote

the book that she referenced about the urgent need to deal with long-term care conditions in our country.

There is certainly no doubt that there is an urgent need to look at the conditions that seniors are living in in long-term care facilities here in Alberta because almost 1,400 residents of long-term care homes so far have died of COVID-19 here in Alberta. I regret to inform the House that at least one of those victims was one of my constituents. I received a heartbreaking letter from the son of one of my constituents a few months ago informing me that I could take his father off of my annual Christmas card list this year because his father had contracted COVID in a long-term care facility and died as a result.

He was incredibly angry, Madam Speaker, because COVID was brought into that facility, according to him, by staff. His father contracted COVID and died as a result of either the negligence or the incompetence of the staff and the people managing this facility. It was particularly heartbreaking to hear that because I know that as Official Opposition we have been calling, ever since the pandemic began, for better working conditions for people in long-term care facilities so that they were at lower risk of bringing COVID into the facilities. I know that the former Minister of Health refused to take any action to address that problem, and the current minister is also sitting on his hands.

It's incredibly distressing to me to know that we have the tools to stop people from contracting COVID and dying from it in long-term care facilities, but we simply refuse to use them. Not only do we have the tools to prevent this illness and death but refuse to use them, Madam Speaker, but we also have a government that refuses to admit any accountability or, in fact, entertain any mechanisms for accountability for its mismanagement of COVID.

That's one of the reasons that I think we need to debate the Seniors Advocate Act. By establishing the Seniors Advocate as an independent office of the Legislature, we could have a person in a position of authority who has the ability to investigate matters regarding COVID and how it has been managed or not managed in long-term care facilities and at least present Albertans with a full accounting of the truth so that they can have a full understanding of what has gone on in our long-term care facilities and understand who is accountable for the errors, the mistakes that were made that resulted in so many deaths in our long-term care facilities.

I need to remind the House although they don't need any reminding. They seem to be keen to dodge accountability at all opportunities. We desperately need accountability for how this government has dealt with the COVID pandemic, and we see the government refuse to admit any accountability or take advantage of any opportunities to provide accountability to the people of Alberta.

Earlier last week my friends here in the Official Opposition brought forward a motion that would have struck an all-party committee that would've investigated this government's mismanagement of COVID. Presumably, had that motion been passed, one of the things that they could've investigated was the situation in long-term care facilities and why so many people have gotten sick and died in those facilities. But, of course, the government shut that down. They said, "Oh, well, we couldn't possibly drag health experts in front of a committee because they're so busy dealing with the fourth wave that we caused," which is curious, Madam Speaker, because they have no problems bringing forward a whole cotillion of public servants in Alberta Health to testify at Public Accounts in two weeks' time. It's curious to me that when it comes to testifying in front of an all-party committee, our public health experts, the people who are tasked with the management of COVID in this province, couldn't possibly find the time to tell Albertans the truth about what's going on with COVID

management in Alberta, but we certainly do have the time to appear before Public Accounts.

We've also seen, Madam Speaker, that the government has used the very Public Accounts Committee, that is a very effective tool to provide accountability on all aspects of government programs and the government's management of COVID, to also avoid accountability. My friends on the Public Accounts Committee, when we appeared in a meeting in September to discuss the agenda of the committee – now that we've had the annual report submitted for 2020-2021, we have the opportunity to examine all of the activities of every department of government and how they've managed COVID – proposed a schedule that would allow the committee to efficiently and effectively deal with the annual reports of all of the government industries.

The government, of course, refused to entertain that and instead voted in favour of a schedule that will kick the can down the road, hopefully, I think, into the future, when they think that Albertans will have forgotten that COVID was an issue that they've done such a poor job of managing. I regret to inform the House that Albertans' memories will be long on this matter, and the Public Accounts Committee members will live to regret the decision that they made to avoid accountability in that matter.

We've seen the government refuse to accept accountability on its management of COVID, including in long-term care facilities, with respect to voting down a motion that would create an all-party committee. We see the government refusing to accept accountability at Public Accounts Committee when it comes to setting the agenda to allow members of this House to hold the government to account in that respect. At the very least, if the government is interested in having some accountability, then they could vote in favour of this piece of legislation, because I think that, like I said, by establishing an independent office of the Seniors Advocate, that person would have the power to conduct his or her own investigations into any matters that they see fit. It would be my hope, certainly, that the issue of long-term care would be top of mind for any person who takes that office.

The other role that the Seniors Advocate would play in the model that's been proposed by my friend from Edmonton-Riverview is a method of allowing people who have these kinds of concerns to have their cases dealt with efficiently and effectively. I can't tell you, Madam Speaker, how many people have approached my office for help on matters concerning seniors in the time that I've been elected as the member of the Legislature for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Edmonton-Gold Bar has one of the highest proportions of seniors of any riding in the entire province of Alberta, so seniors' issues are top of mind for me, as they are for many of my constituents.

3:10

My office is continually inundated with e-mails about people who have concerns for their aging family members. They can't get the adequate home care that they need. You know, the needed health supplies that people assume would be covered by Alberta Health but actually aren't are often left to be paid out of pocket by seniors who don't have the disposable income that's needed.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak on the concurrence debate for Bill 215, brought forward by my esteemed colleague the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I want to begin by just making a few comments as to why we're having this discussion at concurrence. I am pleased to hear, of course, that the members of the private members' bill

committee did provide a recommendation to this committee that we proceed to debate or they recommended that there be a debate on Bill 215. I do think it's still important to have this discussion at the concurrence level, which is really to indicate my support and, I think, the support of many of the members of this House for that debate on Bill 215.

We do know that it's, unfortunately, a reality that many private members' bills don't actually get a chance to progress through the full readings of a private member's bill prior to perhaps a Legislature being prorogued. In that case, those private members' bills don't really continue on. So I want to take this opportunity, and I'm grateful to the procedures of this Assembly that provide me with the opportunity to put on the record clearly at this stage and, hopefully, at others, if we proceed to debate, the importance of what's put forward in Bill 215, which is the establishment of an independent office for the Seniors Advocate.

Now, I know that a number of my colleagues have mentioned already – and it is key – that under the former government, the NDP government, we had established an independent office for a Seniors Advocate, and that role was incredibly important. While I was not part of this Assembly during that time, I understand that the Seniors Advocate which was appointed by this Legislature was incredibly qualified on seniors' issues. I believe it was Dr. Sheree Kwong See, who had extraordinary experience on advocacy and on a number of different issues that specifically address seniors, which often are those issues which specifically address all of us. I think that role was very important.

I've also come to appreciate in my role now as an MLA and also as the critic for Children's Services the importance of the independent offices such as what my colleague is proposing here, the Seniors Advocate. I've seen how important that independent office can be in work that I've done looking at the disabilities advocate as well as the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. That role holds a particular privilege because they are meant to speak for a specific portion of our population, a segment of Albertans who need to have that independent voice, who need to have their specific issues heard, to help those individuals like seniors navigate the number of different processes and challenges and barriers they may face to getting supports that they need but also to provide that oversight of hearing what issues come up on a regular basis, to identify those policy issues.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the debate has now received 55 minutes, so the question will be put.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

Bill 218
Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries)
Amendment Act, 2021

[Adjourned debate October 25: Mr. Schow]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to join debate on the concurrence motion on Bill 218? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on concurrence to Bill 218. My hon. colleague, of course, introduced this, and I believe it's one of the most important bills that we're going to be debating in this place. I think that certainly when we look at these issues, when we look at what's happened in the province, the government is not listening to Albertans. The government is not listening to the interests of Albertans, and we need to see more action from our province. That's why I was so pleased to be able to support my colleague's bill moving forward in

committee, and that's why I was so pleased to see other members of the Assembly also agree that this bill was going to be a positive bill.

Madam Speaker, I recall that it's been a number of months now since that committee met on this bill. I believe it was in the spring session of this Legislature. I recall that members from both sides of this House actually went so far as to say that it was unanimous. Everybody agreed that we needed to have this type of legislation moving forward in this place, and because of that, I believed that it was actually going to be one of those things where we'd be able to have – the government decided that we didn't need to have consultations on this because it was so unanimous and it was so supported. I think it's going to be very interesting to see what happens here in this House today. I think it's going to be very interesting to see what happens in terms of having the government members today speaking on this bill.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I think that certainly we've seen that it's clear that the government does not have enough protections in place for our parks system. It's clear that right now the government has already introduced so many barriers to Albertans accessing our parks system, has introduced so many plans to damage our parks system such as selling and delisting so many of our parks and introducing day fees and annual park fees to access Kananaskis, which we know that southern Albertans like Calgarians use so often, particularly right now, when we're currently facing the fourth wave of this global pandemic, and over the last summer, particularly when Albertans were told to get outside, where it is safer for people to gather. It is safer to have social activities outside, and then at the same time this government brought in more restrictions, made it harder to access these areas, and made it more expensive for families to access the outdoors.

Mr. Speaker – welcome – I think it's very difficult to understand what is going on in this government's mind, right? I think it's very difficult to understand what direction they're trying to take this province. Unfortunately, it seems like this government is trying to privatize and Americanize our parks system, make it so that it'll be less accessible for everyday Albertans. We know that our parks system is world renowned. It's one of the best in the world, and we have people that travel all over the planet to come see our parks system and come see our amazing outdoor spaces that have amazing natural heritage and deep, intrinsic economic value. We have these major industries in Alberta that are based on our parks, and instead of supporting that industry, instead of supporting our economy, instead of supporting our tourism industry, we see the government time and time again find new ways to attack our parks.

We see Albertans actually noticing this. How do I know that Albertans are noticing this, Mr. Speaker? Because when I drive to the Legislature every single day – I drive through my neighbourhood in south Edmonton, I drive through my constituency in Edmonton-South, I drive through many of my colleagues' constituencies across Edmonton, and what do I see? I see signs, multiple signs, from different groups advocating against this government's plan for parks, right? Whether it's defend Alberta headwaters signs, whether it's stop the coal mining signs, whether it's protect Alberta parks signs – there are so many different advocacy groups – if there's anything that I've noticed, it's that there are more signs out right now against UCP policy, against UCP plans for parks than sometimes we even see during election campaigns. People are so worked up about this. There's no election, yet they're still willing to put something on their lawn, in front of their house, to put stickers on their bumpers, to go out and say: this government has the wrong plan; this government is doing the wrong thing.

It's very clear – it's very clear – that this government has failed to keep their promise on parks. They said that they were going to protect our parks system, that they were going to make it more accessible. Instead, we see them celebrating taking more money out of Albertans' pockets. We see them attacking the visitors to K Country with virtually no improvements to our parks system, virtually no upgrades to things like waste bins or outhouses or anything like that. Instead, we just see Albertans paying more and getting less, right?

3:20

We see Albertans paying more and getting less, and that's a theme with this government. It's something that this government does time and time again. It's something that – this government continues to try and take money away from Albertans and give them fewer services. In this particular case, where Albertans were told throughout the pandemic – they were told, and they continue to be told – to go outside and that it's safer to gather outside, it's safer to socialize outside, and our amazing parks system is one of the places you can do that, where that was supposed to be the case, this government then, on the other hand, decides to go out and make it more expensive to do that, right?

For a family who may have suffered during this economic crisis that has gone along with the global health crisis, accessing our parks, and particularly, I know, for southern Albertans and Calgarians accessing Kananaskis country, is something that is very low cost and easy to access for families, right? It's something that – I know that when I was younger, we would access our park system and go camping and get outdoors, and that was something that was a low-cost way of enjoying our summers.

I know there are millions of Albertans that agree with me because so many Albertans are putting up signs, writing letters, writing e-mails, making phone calls, sending me fax messages about how upset they are with this government's plan. Mr. Speaker, you'll know – of course, you have a constituency office as well – that when you start getting fax messages about an issue, it's something that's really resonating with Albertans, right? You know that this is something that's really crossing the boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, I really encourage that all members of this House support this bill moving forward. I think it's a very clearly important bill. I think it's a bill that's going to ensure that we have a parks system that is going to last for a long time and allow Albertans to access our great outdoors. It's going to protect our parks in a way that this government has shown that they cannot do, cannot be trusted to do, has shown that they cannot be allowed to be trusted without legislation protecting our outdoors. Clearly, this is that legislation, right? Clearly, this is the legislation that's going to allow us to do that work.

We know that Albertans do not trust this minister, Albertans do not trust this Premier, and Albertans do not trust this government. It is very clear to me. It is abundantly clear to Albertans that we need legislation in place to tell this government what to do because this government will not listen to Albertans, they will not listen to their constituents, and they will not listen to anybody. Instead, we need to have a plan in place to make sure that we have real protection policies.

It is something that I think is disappointing, that we're at this point. I think it's extraordinarily disappointing that we're at the point where we have to go forward with this dramatic legislation, in many aspects. I know my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar will enjoy that. I know that it is something that very clearly Albertans do support, right? I know it's something that we do support.

We do want to have this in place because it makes it clear that protections for parks are something that is not transitory. It's something that is not going to just be at the whim of the government. It's not going to be something that's at the whim of the day. Instead, we're going to be looking at a policy that's going to be long lasting. Instead, we're going to be looking at a policy that will ensure that this Premier, this minister, and perhaps the next Premier, which may be closer than the current Premier thinks, will also not be allowed to attack our parks, will also not be allowed to delist and sell off our parks, will also not be allowed to attack our great outdoors, and will not be allowed to go after Albertans and their backyard.

That's why I think it's so important that we move forward today. That's why I think it's so important that we have this legislation. That's why I think it's so important that we do have an opportunity to debate this in the House. This bill should move forward, and all members should vote in favour of concurrence.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have about 30 seconds left here, and with that, I would like to move that we adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Good. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Ms Issik: I rise to request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 and Standing Order 9(1) to proceed immediately to Committee of the Whole on Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 207 Reservists' Recognition Day Act

The Chair: We are on amendment A1. There are 79 minutes remaining in this debate. Are there any members wishing to join the debate on the amendment? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity here this afternoon. I didn't want to jump up too fast because I know a lot of the members in the House here are very supportive of Bill 207, and I didn't want to hog all of the time. But seeing as how they're going to give me the opportunity, I'm certainly going to take the chance to speak a little bit about Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act and, of course, the amendment that we have before us, A1.

You know, the last time that we had the opportunity to debate the bill, one of the things that I was asking the sponsor of the bill was: what kind of feedback has he managed to get over the course of time while he was consulting on it around these changes, specifically in section (2), 53.2, by striking out 26 weeks and substituting 12? We were talking about how hard it is sometimes to retain reservists, to get Albertans to step up and be a part of that organization, and what type of feedback he was hearing. My hope is, of course, that as we proceed further here in Committee of the

Whole, maybe we'll get a chance to hear a little bit about that information.

As the MLA for Edmonton-Decore, located in northeast Edmonton – we're not very far from the base – I've had the opportunity to talk to, you know, not only regular forces members but reservists as well about what kinds of things that they do, the hardships they endure, the sacrifices that they make. Of course, specifically when it comes to reservists, I mean, these are individuals that, when called upon, are pretty much just like any other regular forces members. Certainly, where we've honoured them in the past along with the regular Canadian Armed Forces, we're looking to maybe carve out a little bit of specific time to recognize what it is that they do.

You know, I think kind of keeping that sort of thing in mind, what are the things that maybe more broadly the member sponsoring the bill is hoping that the government might step up to do? Rather than maybe just simply creating a recognition day, could this bill trigger maybe some bigger things that could be done, more tangible items? I know, for instance, that when the NDP were in government, one of the things we did was recognizing vehicle training within the reserves so that it can be recognized as commercial training back out in civilian life. I would certainly be curious to hear a little bit about: what are the hopes that this bill could trigger to be able to create more opportunities for reservists, I mean, as long as people like to serve? But I also think about, like, the times when they've said: I think it's time to change and head back into civilian life.

3:30

I would be very much interested to hear some of the thoughts. You know, some of the members of the government might pop up here during the discussion and maybe give some insight into that just a little bit so that we can see that this is more than just, you know, a simple time with which to say, "We're grateful for you," but then it kind of just sort of stops there.

You know, I've been on record before in the past – and I'll continue to be – when it does come to our Canadian Forces members, our reservists, all of them. Historically we haven't done such a great job when it comes to supporting them after the fact. These are the individuals we call upon in times of need and disasters, things like that, and while they're running towards it, the rest of us are all running away. Those things come at a cost, and we need to be prepared to step up and support those individuals when we've asked them to do that. Historically we have not done a very good job of that.

As I was mentioning last time during debate, one of the things that is going on right now right in Edmonton-Decore in my very own neighbourhood of Evansdale: the Homes for Heroes project is being built. As I mentioned, it's coming along very, very nicely. Here was an opportunity that an organization took to try to help our homeless veterans, you know, to get them the supports that they need and to provide them the encouragement to be able to transition back. It's great that an outside organization was able to do that.

I was very, very happy to advocate towards, you know, the Minister of Finance to help put that project over the top as well as speaking to Edmonton city council in favour of it. But it's not always enough just to have housing. You have to have those wraparound supports that are there as well, something I know our government had taken very, very seriously. My very good friend from Edmonton-Castle Downs, who was serving as the liaison to the Canadian military and continues to do so on behalf of the Official Opposition, moved the dial on that very, very well. Not far from where the Homes for Heroes project is located, there are services that veterans are able to tap into more than just the housing, because we know it has to come as a complete package, and that support has to continue.

I'm hoping, as I said, as we progress here in Committee of the Whole, that perhaps we'll get some members of the government that will reaffirm that continued commitment towards our veterans, towards our military personnel, that the supports are there, that they will continue to be there into the future, and that, you know, we will step up and look after our regular forces members and our reservists when the time comes after we've called them to help.

I am grateful to the member who sponsored the bill for bringing this forward. You know, I must say, though, that I wish we'd had some opportunity last week, just before we started debating this bill, to get into some of the other private members' business that was potentially before the House; for instance, around PTSD. That is a very, very real struggle not only for regular services members but for reservists, too, when they go into a disaster zone, be it the Fort McMurray fires, the floods in Calgary, trying to navigate that after the fact.

You know, those individuals go in there, and they are just so laser focused and get the job done no matter what happens, but it's afterwards that they get that time to process. So we maybe have some opportunities there in terms of private members' legislation to provide those types of PTSD support. I mean, everybody knows that service dogs provide a very, very valuable service to those individuals, but I don't want us to think: "Well, that's all we need to do. We've put that in place." There's more, and that's why it's so critical that we get to some of these others bills that talk about that.

I think that in the last debate, last week, I was talking about, you know, removing some of the barriers for people to be able to join reservists, something as simple as child care, having an affordable child care system that these individuals are able to tap into.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act. What I find a little strange today is that, you know, as opposition members we are literally carrying this debate. There are no government members rising to speak to this particular act, which is surprising to me. I thought there was a lot of passion and a lot of information about this particular piece of legislation, and I'm just hearing crickets today, which doesn't send a great message.

In any event, I'm going to, again, talk about this piece of legislation. For those of you watching along at home who don't know, I will give you a little bit of information on what this bill does. This act recognizes the last Saturday of September to be Reservists' Recognition Day, and

the purposes of this Act are

- (a) to increase the public's awareness of the invaluable contributions that reservists of the Canadian reserve force make to the communities of Alberta through their civilian and military roles.

Before I move on to the next point under this piece of legislation, I would just like to on behalf of my colleagues stand here and thank all of the members of the military that came to Alberta's aid during this fourth surge of COVID, this fourth wave of COVID, that was entirely preventable, for showing up here and providing – I think the last I read, some of the nurses were deployed to Fort McMurray. I don't recall the other community that they were sent to, but I'm quite sure that the health care workers in those communities and members of those communities are very grateful. I, too, am very grateful and would just like to thank them publicly.

The next point explaining what this piece of legislation does: it seeks

- (b) to recognize the important role of the Canadian reserve force in protecting the safety and security of Albertans and Canadians,
- (c) to recognize the service of reservists deployed in international and domestic operations of the Canadian Forces, and

then finally,

- (d) to honour the sacrifices of former reservists and those being made by current reservists and their families.

Perhaps the other members could, you know, though they don't want to contribute to debate, be quiet while other people are speaking to the piece of legislation.

In any event, Madam Chair, what I would like to say: what is glaringly missing from this act – and, again, I will speak to the fact that it was amended – and that amendment seems to be the most, I guess, significant piece of action in this piece of legislation. What is missing are all of the other things that we know to be true about members of the military.

You know, it doesn't take much. Just reading through the news on a daily basis, I think we are all aware of the fact that for members of the Armed Forces, whether they're reservists or not, PTSD is a reality in their lives. We have heard far too many stories about former members that continue to struggle, which ends up resulting in – you know, whether they're living lives away from their families or on the street, they don't have secure homes, and they are dealing with all sorts of complex issues. You don't hear anything about that in this legislation, anything that talks about what the risks are.

3:40

We can thank them. Absolutely, we should thank them every day. We should have a day to identify and to thank, specifically, reservists. Absolutely, we should. We should – oh, I had a poppy on, but it's fallen off – make a point every year of valuing all of the women and men who have given so much up until now. But it's also important to do more than just talk about how much we value their service and how important they are: to actually put down policies and make supports available to address the very real concerns that are there.

In any event, going back to Bill 207, as I said a little bit earlier, the bill was amended on June 14, 2021, and I'm actually going to read that amendment. It's amended as follows: by striking out the title "Reservists' Recognition Day Act" and substituting "Reservists' Recognition Act." By adding the following, what it does is that it changes the Employment Standards Code, and it is amended by striking out "26 consecutive weeks" and substituting "12 consecutive weeks." So what this amendment to this bill has done, which is indeed the most substantial part of the bill: it actually changes the reservists' leave, that is granted after 12 continuous weeks of work instead of 26.

Now, as you can tell, we are obviously all in support of this amendment. However, I would like to note that at the standing committee for private members' bills the bill sponsor did not mention this as something that reservists were asking for, and he did not have people come to present to the committee at the time to request this either. Now, you know, I can understand that during COVID there was less time to get these things organized, but I think that for something this substantial, this important, this should have been done.

It sort of raises the question that we ask frequently in this place, whatever the piece of legislation is that we're debating. We ask: whom did you consult? It seems to me that this would be a pretty straightforward piece of legislation to consult on – to speak to the reservists, to speak to people that thought of having a recognition day, and then further amending the legislation; I'm assuming that that came from somewhere – to have those folks in to talk about

why that was important. That is incredibly – well, I shouldn't say disappointing. It's not disappointing anymore, Madam Chair, because we're just used to it. We're used to the government deciding things, bringing things forward, and amending things with very little explanation and most often very little consultation. However, in this particular case we're happy to support this amendment as it does go a long way to supporting reservists.

Again, I'm going to put on the record that we are very grateful for the services of reservists in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are certainly happy to recognize a day. I think we would be far happier to recognize a whole lot more than a day. We would be happy to recognize supports and services for reservists and their families, who deal with many issues that I'm quite certain many of them face, those complex issues around PTSD.

Recognizing reservists for their work is a good action for this government to take, but once again it happens all the time in this place that we'll have the government or some of us stand up and recognize that it's this day or that it's the world day to celebrate this or that it's the International Day of Persons with Disabilities or that it's this day, and those are all great things. Those are all wonderful activities to highlight a group of people that perhaps we don't think about on a regular basis. But you can't just do a day. You can't just have a day, wash your hands, feel like you've done a good job, that it's over, and go home. You have to have the policies, the programs, and the supports in place to actually back up your words, or your day in this case. Unfortunately, this was a unique opportunity for the private member and for the government to introduce a piece of legislation but then to amend it to put more teeth into it to actually show that you appreciate the work of reservists.

In order to demonstrate how much you appreciate that work of reservists, here are policy changes and program changes that you've made to give them the supports that they need, whether it's supports for affordable housing, whether it's supports for free or accessible counselling, whether it's income support, whatever it is. None of that is in here.

I also want to point out, as we have before, that the government of Alberta hires many reservists, so we don't need to consult far and wide with reservists, which is once again a little bit disappointing. It's not even disappointing at this point, Madam Chair, because we're really quite used to it. They did not even do that, to let us know who they consulted, even when they were available within government, so that is sad.

While we were in government, I would like to point out that we were proud to recognize vehicle training in the reserves to also be recognized for commercial driving outside of the reserves. You know, this was quite a few years ago now. I'm trying to think back to that debate at the time. I think there was sort of universal support for that, but I do recall that one of the things that we did around these rules was actually reach out and talk to people, which is why specifically we found out exactly what changes needed to be made, that people wanted made.

The recognition of driving classification took away, obviously, burdensome duplications of testing and allowed reservists' qualifications to be credible with employers. I think that goes back to something tangible that we can do to support reservists, one of those things being around employment, active employment with the military. You know, once all of those things end and reservists are no longer active . . .

The Chair: Are there any members wishing to join the debate on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise in Committee of the Whole on Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition

Day Act. Again, I'm a little surprised to not hear from government members on this bill. You know, for those Albertans who might be watching on a Monday afternoon the Assembly TV, they might note that we see a lot of games being played sometimes in this Legislature by the government members to avoid having private members' bills that are brought forward by opposition members up for debate. There have been a lot of things, a lot of procedural moves and things, that have taken place to avoid having our private members' business discussed in this House. One would think, then, when there's the opportunity to debate private members' bills brought forward by government members, that the government would then actually debate on it, especially as this is a topic that I think all the members of this Assembly care about. Again, I share my colleague's surprise that we are not hearing more from government members on this.

To that end, I'm pleased to speak in this Assembly on Bill 207 in Committee of the Whole. As the Member for St. Albert mentioned, we are, of course, on an amendment. The amendment was brought forward by the member to amend not only the proposed name of the act but also to basically amend a section of the Employment Standards Code which is section 53.2. For those who are not aware, the Employment Standards Code talks about reservists' leave, and it actually sets out when an individual who is a reservist is entitled to take leave for, of course, a deployment to a Canadian Forces' operation outside Canada, inside Canada, for annual training, or any operation or activity set out in that act. It basically sets out a protection, an employment protection, for reservists to be able to take a leave without pay, but their employer must provide them a leave when they're taking this leave for either training or deployment purposes.

Under the current Employment Standards Code it sets out that an individual who is a reservist must have been employed for at least 26 weeks prior to being able to be entitled to that leave without pay from an employer. The proposed amendment before us today in this House in Committee of the Whole is to strike out 26 consecutive weeks and lower it to 12 consecutive weeks. Essentially, a reservist would be entitled to this reservists' leave after 12 weeks of consecutive work for an employer, which is, I would argue, a very important thing.

What I would like to hear a little bit more about since we are in Committee of the Whole and this is an opportunity, I believe, for the member who has brought forward the bill to answer some questions and maybe discuss that – I think it is an important amendment, but I also note that, when looking back on some of the transcripts from the debate or the discussion that took place in the private members' bill committee on Bill 207 when it was brought forward for that committee's consideration, the member bringing forward this bill indicated that in consultations and negotiations with the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, the CFLC, one of the things that was regularly brought up as a concern for reservists is that employers might be hesitant to hire a reservist because of the leave, you know, for deployment or for training and that they're hearing that it can be a barrier for some employers. They're hesitant because they don't want to hire an employee, maybe, who they fear is going to go off on leave for training after short notice or for long periods of time.

3:50

You know, I think the goal of this bill appears to be to show our support for reservists, recognize that, and also provide this reservists' leave after a shorter period of time. I'm wondering how those two elements work together. Will that make employers more hesitant to employ somebody who is a reservist because they'll now have to give leave after a much shorter period of time, 12 weeks as

opposed to 26 weeks of consecutive leave? I mean, I would certainly hope not. I would certainly hope that employers would not be discouraged from hiring reservists who are courageously and also valiantly giving their time to be able to eventually go off and serve our country. That's what they're training for, and that's what they're preparing for.

But we all know that employers have business objectives to meet, and they have hesitations. I hope that that would not be a basis for any action or hesitation of an employer, but, you know, certainly any woman in this Chamber might have heard, in their time, hesitation by an employer to hire a woman of a certain age because of concerns that they would go off on maternity leave. I certainly know that that is still a common concern for many women as they enter into certain careers, that there is that hesitation. That idea of taking a leave, unfortunately, can be really a discriminatory barrier for many women to participate in the workforce.

I certainly would hope that we're not setting up conditions that would make it more likely that reservists would be not as likely to get hired because they will be able to take reservists' leave after only 12 weeks. Really, this was a question for the mover of the bill, to sort of reconcile that feedback that was coming from the Canadian Forces Liaison Council and to hear what feedback they may have given on this amendment if they had. I'm not sure, again, if they were consulted on this particular amendment. This was not before the committee. This was not part of the bill before the committee's consideration, so perhaps at that time this was not a question that was posed. I would like to hear a little bit more about how that objective can be achieved, increasing employment of reservists with this amendment.

To that end, I still want to continue to offer my unconditional support for this bill. I think we've all been very clear, many of the members on all sides, about the important role that reservists play, that we want to encourage and support and recognize those individuals who have taken on reservists' work, who do the training, who do the preparing, and who then, obviously, of course, go on and actually serve our country by going off on leave and being deployed. That is work that we are all grateful for in this Assembly and in Alberta and across the country as well.

It's an interesting, of course, time to be talking about this given that we are coming up to Remembrance Day, to be giving more thought to that. I certainly want to echo the comments from some of my other colleagues that recognition days are valuable and they are certainly worthy; however, we must do more than simply just recognize. Reservists are really average Albertans who are living in our communities and doing their work and also preparing and training for the possibility of deployment, but they're individuals who have homes, who have families, who drive vehicles, who have other jobs. We need to be doing more to support them, as we must be doing more to support all Albertans, because right now this is a tough time for Albertans, whether it be for health reasons or economic reasons. We certainly have not seen any of the actions from the current government make life easier for Albertans in any way. In fact, the enormous amount of strain that Albertans are facing right now as a result of decisions and poor choices and lack of choices and lack of action by this current government is having a significant impact.

So if we're going to say that we recognize and value reservists, let's recognize that they are fulsome, active members of our society who are participating and engaging in all aspects of our society through health care, through education, through their work, through child care needs, through postsecondary. We need to be supporting them all around. Simply just having a day where we say "Thank you" is not quite enough. We need to be making their lives a whole lot better, and I encourage the members of this Assembly,

particularly the members on the government side, to be giving a little bit more thought as to how they can make Albertans' lives a little better because to date I would think most Albertans can conclude that their life has become a whole lot harder over the last two and a half years and not solely because of the pandemic. I really would like to encourage the members to think about those aspects of their decisions as they come forward.

Again, we are at Committee of the Whole. I look forward to the potential and the possibility at some point of discussing this bill more thoroughly and through a vigorous debate from all members of this House. I would like to hear a little bit more on that question that I raised about how lowering the period of time before a reservist is eligible for leave without pay would affect their ability to be hired or employers' willingness to hire them on. I think that's an important objective, but again we don't want to have the after-effect of actually making it harder for reservists to become employed. I think those are important questions. I look forward to hearing some detailed responses from the mover of the bill as well as from government members and to continue on this fulsome discussion so that we can move forward with recognizing reservists and the value that they bring to Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland on amendment A1.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the fulsome speech from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. She did pose a question, and I was trying to see if it – we don't have 29(2)(a) anymore, so I can't jump up at the end. Interventions – I'm getting used to the new format – don't apply, I guess, when we're in Committee of the Whole. But there are a couple of things that she fired a shot across the bow, so for the folks at home that understand, right now the reason why a bunch of us on the government side aren't jumping up to speak to the amendment is because we support it, we want it to go forward, and we want to get back on the main bill so we can pass this really good piece of legislation.

I'm going to take a little bit of a shot at the folks next door. Fortunately for that, people that watch at home kind of know my style a bit. I'll keep my stick on the ice until we need a clarification. We don't virtue-signal here on this side of the aisle. When I look at... [interjection] The MLA from Edmonton-Gold Bar is chuckling over there. This is really good, because the very first event that I ever went to was an event that was walking for veterans, which happened to be in his own constituency. He happened to be absent, so he must have been busy somewhere else, maybe looking at a pipeline or maybe protesting something – I don't know – because they're really good at protesting, but showing up in support is a completely different thing.

The only ones that were there were the newly elected MLAs from the UCP caucus as well the Conservatives from the political party there, so we had Member of Parliament Dane Lloyd. He was there. We had myself. The MLA from Airdrie-Cochrane was there. What we learned at that event was the connectivity, that we all have this. In the construction industry we have a lot of folks that have transferable skill sets. We recognize folks in the military all the time. In fact, in my own training in college there were several reservists that were there taking the same training that I was. So when we're talking about recognizing, it's not recognizing them as a foreign entity; it's recognizing our brothers and sisters while we're there. Chance Bures also does that network there.

We also found out about mefloquine. Again, there was an event talking about mefloquine. It was on *W5*. It was some treatments that were taking place. There were some bad connotations to it. Again,

folks in my constituency were knitting blankets for the veterans. The MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane was at this event. It must have been tough for a lot of the opposition to make it there. It was at city hall. The MLA for Airdrie-Cochrane and I were there, two – two – MLAs to actually stand up and be there with our soldiers and our reservists. All happened to be wearing blue.

I would encourage the members opposite, since this is an important bill, to let us get back to the bill so we can talk about it and get in our speeches and tell you all the good things that we're doing, how we've integrated, how we've been involved with folks from the reserves, reservists from the main battle forces that we have, and maybe talk about some of the histories and why the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont brought this forward in the first place. Enough with the theatrics. Let's get back to business.

The Chair: Any members wishing to join the debate on amendment A1, or shall I call the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill, Bill 207, in Committee of the Whole. I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

4:00

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to rise today and support Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Act. Legislation like this plays an important part in communities across the province and goes a long way in uniting Albertans on the importance of our over 2,300 brave men and women in our nation's military reserves. These men and women operate out of or report to bases across Alberta such as the 20th Independent Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, Canadian Army reserve unit located in Lethbridge.

Madam Chair, 97 per cent of Canadians live 45 minutes away from one of the 122 reserve units across 117 communities in Canada. These facilities are integral parts to our communities, and they also bring so many people to those communities. Giving due recognition to reservists is about paying respect to those who put their lives on the line to be on our front lines, assisting our communities at the first sign of any emergency. Acknowledging the service and sacrifices of our military reservists, whether they are deployed internationally, assisting in local matters, or working through school work or their day job, it is extremely important that we show our appreciation.

Many reservists volunteer to deploy on domestic and international operations such as provincial emergencies or international conflicts when positions are available. When they are not reporting for duty or volunteering at home or abroad, the majority of reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in postsecondary studies. Working with our reservists and even our veterans to ensure that they have the supports they need for everyday life is critical. These brave women and men have put their lives on hold in emergency situations or their lives on the line to serve overseas. These sacrifices are something we do not take lightly.

Ensuring that there are supports for reservists and veterans who choose to attend postsecondary is the least we can do, in my opinion, supports like the Alex Decoteau scholarship, which provides \$5,000 to military members and their families so they can pursue a postsecondary education after service. We also launched the veteran-friendly campus pilot program at the University of Alberta through a \$714,000 grant. This amazing program will help develop academic, social, and mental health supports for veterans pursuing a postsecondary education as part of their transition back

into civilian life. The veteran-friendly campus program is a great step in helping support our veterans, and with its success, I hope to see similar programs adopted at Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge.

Another point that I cannot talk about enough is the high level of community involvement our reservists, active military, and veterans do. One individual who comes to mind because of his involvement with community outreach for the military and the base in Lethbridge is Warrant Officer Glenn Miller. Glenn served 25 years in the Royal Canadian Artillery, from 1982 to 2007. His career started in the 3rd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery in Shilo, Manitoba, on the 40-millimetre Bofors anti-aircraft gun system and the Blowpipe very low-level surface-to-air missile system. During the Cold War he served in the 128 Airfield Air Defence Battery at Canadian Forces Baden-Söllingen, West Germany, and shortly thereafter the 4th Air Defence Regiment was formed, and he trained as a detachment commander on both Skyguard radars MK 1 and MK 2, providing protection for the airfield.

From 1991 to 1995 he was a recruiter for the Canadian Armed Forces in Toronto. In 1995 he first came to Lethbridge and served in the 18th Air Defence Regiment as part of the regular force to provide training for the militia unit. He has instructed on various leadership courses and the Javelin detachment and Skyguard radar detachment commander courses at the artillery school.

After retiring, he completed the communications arts program, majoring in advertising and public relations, at Lethbridge College in 2009. Mr. Miller has been an active volunteer in the community and in many not-for-profit organizations and service clubs. He has also served as a service officer, assisting veterans and their families for over a decade with the General Stewart Branch No. 4, Royal Canadian Legion. He remains committed to working with many organizations and schools across southern Alberta promoting remembrance activities. In fact, just last year we were able to secure further funding for a bronze statue commemorating the service of World War II and the actual artillery gun that was used and is still used to commemorate some of our activities here at the Legislature.

Glenn's story and his constant support for our communities show just how much our military members, whether those on active duty, in reserves, or those who previously served, have such a critical impact in our lives and in our communities.

If passed, the date chosen for the reservists' recognition day will fall on the same day as the reservists' open house, the last Saturday of September. Putting these two days together provides a unique opportunity for people to visit reserves closest to them and learn about what happens at the reserve facilities and what they can do to get involved.

As I said before, so many of these amazing men and women work day-to-day jobs, go to school, all while committing to serve a larger purpose if called upon. That is truly incredible. Given the excellent work our reservists do for our local communities and the selflessness that they exemplify, not just through their commitment to serve but also their commitment to their local communities, I strongly believe that legislation like this is long overdue. I am proud to stand and wholeheartedly support this bill, and I ask all members of this House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today in support of Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Act. I first want to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont and all those involved for proposing this bill and bringing this important matter to the House. Now,

everyone knows that the reservists play an important role in our Canadian Armed Forces. These brave men and women have signed up to serve our country, to keep us all safe, all while maintaining civilian jobs or being enrolled in postsecondary studies.

In Alberta there are upwards of 2,300 army, air force, and naval reservists spread across 17 units throughout the province. Of these 17 units, there are seven in Edmonton, six in Calgary, two in Red Deer, and one each in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. Here in Edmonton these units include 6 Intelligence Company, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41 Service Battalion, 41 Combat Engineer Regiment, 41 Signal Regiment, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, and the South Alberta Light Horse.

Now, these reservists participate in a variety of trades. These include combat arms, engineering, army signalling, and other supportive capacities such as logistics, human resources, and finance, just to name a few. The government of Alberta is proud to recognize strong leadership skills and exceptional contributions to our communities. As such, we are proud to be the largest employer of reserve force members in the province of Alberta. These part-time reservists often spend one night a week and one weekend a month training so that they are ready to serve when duty calls.

Now, many of Alberta's fine reservists volunteer for duty to assist our province during many natural disasters such as the 2011 Slave Lake fire, the 2013 Calgary floods, and the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire.

While many reservists are not ordered to participate in overseas missions, many choose to volunteer to do so. Throughout our history our fine reservists have shown their courage and bravery through their participation in world wars, Afghanistan, and many other humanitarian causes. They've participated alongside regular forces members in Latvia and Ukraine, amongst others. We owe these brave men and women a debt of gratitude, and we should do what we can to make it easier for them to answer the call of duty.

That is why our government is looking at making changes to reservist leave. Reservist leave allows for our military members to take time off work without the risk of losing their jobs. Employers must grant reservist leave and ensure that the reservist is given their same or equivalent job back when the employee returns. Currently a reservist must be employed for 26 weeks before being eligible for reservist leave without the possibility of the employer denying the request. Our government is seeking to change the eligibility for reservist leave to 12 weeks. A reservist must give four weeks' notice if they are intending on going on leave, with the employer being able to ask for proof. Now, this action would not only make life easier on our reservists but would bring us in line with other jurisdictions.

Madam Chair, I'm also proud of the work the military liaison has done for our Canadian Forces members through such programs as the Homes for Heroes program – this is a program to build tiny homes for veterans transitioning back into civilian life – the Heroes in Mind, Advocacy and Research Consortium at the University of Alberta, of which the aim is to develop web-based resources to build resilience among first responders, military members, and emergency services personnel and expand clinical trials to treat posttraumatic stress disorder; as well as the creation of a veteran-friendly campus, a two-year pilot program at the University of Alberta to develop academic, social, and mental health supports for veterans pursuing a postsecondary education as part of their transition back into civilian life.

Bill 207 would further honour Alberta's fine reservists with the creation of a reservists' recognition day. Now, this day would fall on the last Saturday of September so that it correlates to the date of the reservists' open house. The reservists' open house provides an

opportunity for people to visit their facilities and learn more about what they can do and how to get people more involved.

4:10

This bill gives us an important opportunity to increase the public's awareness of the invaluable contributions the Canadian Reserve Force makes to the communities of Alberta through their civilian and military roles. It will recognize the important role of the Canadian Reserve Force in protecting the safety and security of Albertans and Canadians. It will recognize the service of reservists deployed in international and domestic operations of the Canadian Armed Forces and will honour the sacrifices of former reservists and those being made by current reservists and their families.

Madam Chair, we owe our reservists and their families a great debt of gratitude. This bill is but one simple action to recognize all of the ways our reservists, past and present, have contributed to Alberta. That's why I'm proud to support this bill, and I would encourage all other members of this House to do so as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to join debate on Bill 207? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague for bringing forward this bill, which I think is particularly important. You know, I've been listening to many of the debates thus far and the speeches thus far. It's been reassuring to me to be able to hear many of the real, practical, and tangible things that our government has done over the course of the past two years to help support members of our Armed Forces while earlier listening to members opposite say that this bill does nothing, that it's just an appreciation day, and that actions are more important. Again, reassuring to hear many of the pieces . . . [interjections] Again, there they go. They can't listen. They just like to keep heckling and just keep yelling and screaming, but that's fine. I'm really proud of our colleagues here, who have taken efforts over the course of the past two years to actually make life better for many people in our Armed Forces and in the military.

One in particular – actually, both of the issues that I wanted to draw attention to and that I wanted to speak on are particularly important. I know that my other colleagues raised it, because it has to do with postsecondary education. Of course, given that they touch on postsecondary education, there are areas where I had the opportunity to be a little bit more involved. The first of those related to the implementation of the new scholarship, the Alex Decoteau award of honour.

Funnily enough, I was just mentioning earlier today in question period about how our government has taken additional steps to provide new scholarships and supports to a wide range of Albertans because we understand that – I don't mean to go off on a tangent here – accessibility to postsecondary education is a complicated issue that requires comprehensive solutions. So we have to look at measures in which we can support more rural Albertans to access postsecondary education. We have to look at measures to encourage more individuals, adult learners from other areas, to access postsecondary education, be they veterans or members of the military. It's a challenging and complex problem that requires comprehensive solutions.

It's a very important award, of course, recognizing a very heroic individual and at the same time creating opportunities for more veterans and members of our military to be able to pursue postsecondary education. That's critically important because accessing postsecondary education opens up many opportunities and pathways for individuals to create better opportunities for

themselves and to create a better life. I'm particularly proud of the work that this government has done to create that award and to give veterans new opportunities and open up new doors for themselves and their families, because, of course, the award applies in certain circumstances to individuals who have maybe paid the ultimate price and paid the ultimate sacrifice. It gives eligibility to their family members to pursue that award both for themselves and, in other circumstances, their families as well.

The other piece. Again, I know that my colleagues mentioned this. Another piece that I'm also particularly proud of has to do with the establishment of Alberta's first veteran-friendly campus. I want to thank the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont as I recall him bringing this to my attention and sitting down with individuals within my ministry along with other representatives from the U of A, the University of Alberta, to talk a little bit more about this idea and to talk a little bit more about this concept. It was truly inspiring and rewarding to hear about what they were hoping to achieve as part of this new initiative. Of course, they were looking to hire some new individuals at the University of Alberta that could create really custom options for veterans and other military professionals and have the right support structure. Although other provinces had taken that step and had made an effort towards establishing veteran-friendly campuses, Alberta had not yet done so.

I believe that this wasn't something, in fact, that we had committed to or talked about, actually, in the last campaign. You look at the campaign platform back from 2019, and this wasn't actually on there, but I really again want to commend the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for seeing this as an initiative that was very worth while and that could make a real difference in people's lives, that could really help veterans find new opportunities through postsecondary education. As soon as he brought the idea to me, I was in full support. I was very happy to work very closely with him and individuals at the University of Alberta to actually make this happen and to actually make this become a reality.

One of the things I remember, though, in discussing with the member and the representatives from the University of Alberta, was: what is the potential to scale this? I think it's a very worthwhile investment. I forget the exact dollar amount. I think it was just over \$700,000 that we looked at for the two-year pilot program, but again I was very interested and concerned to understand: how do we scale this? Again, I thought this was an incredibly important initiative, and I would love to see an environment where more of our campuses adopt the standard or adopt the policies and practices that will help them establish a veteran-friendly campus.

This was one of the things that we asked them to look at and to consider as they go down this trajectory of creating this two-year pilot program. We had underscored the importance that after the research and the experience were learned from the pilot, we then make those results and those conclusions and those best practices available to all of our other campuses and all of our other postsecondary institutions, because we need to do more to help encourage and support veterans to find postsecondary educational opportunities and, as I said before, recognizing that this is an important part when we talk about accessibility. It's accessibility for adult learners, for younger learners, maybe more traditional learners that are transitioning out of high school to postsecondary but also for more mature learners or other people who are coming back from other careers, be they veterans or other individuals that are looking to reskill and get back into the workforce.

Again, I think it's, especially when we talk about a veteran-friendly campus, an initiative that helps to recognize our veterans and also to create meaningful opportunities for them, to allow them to succeed and to allow them greater opportunities. I think we can all agree. Unfortunately, I know the members opposite for some

reason don't recognize the actions that have been taken to support veterans, but I'm happy to hear the statements from many of my colleagues who have used their speeches as an opportunity to highlight those accomplishments. Again, it's part of the reason that I wanted to stand and speak to this bill, so that I can reinforce those particular accomplishments. Bill 207 as well, of course, the establishment of reservists' recognition day, is also another meaningful and tangible step in the right direction in recognizing what contributions so many of our reservists and veterans make.

4:20

It's something that I understand quite on a personal level as well. I was just telling the minister of agriculture. I think many people in the House may not know this, but I'm a dual citizen. I hold citizenship both within Canada, of course, and the Republic of Cyprus, where my parents are originally from, and I spent a number of years living there. At the time when I was living there and even from before, they have compulsory military service in the Republic of Cyprus. It's actually the second-longest duration of compulsory military service in the world next to Israel. Every male must complete about 25 months, if I'm not mistaken – I think it recently changed but about 25 months – of military service. This applies to every citizen even if you're . . . [Mr. Nicolaidis' speaking time expired]

With that, perhaps at another time I'll tell you more.

The Chair: Any members wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to the minister and my other colleagues that have mentioned and been talking about the Reservists' Recognition Act. Thanks to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing it up. For the record, Madam, through you to the folks at home and across the aisle: purposes. This is one of those acts that's so simple. It's great because you can quickly rattle it off.

The purposes of this Act are

- (a) to increase the public's aware of the invaluable contributions that reservists of the Canadian reserve force make to the communities of Alberta through their civilian and military roles,
- (b) to recognize the important role of the Canadian reserve force in protecting the safety and security of Albertans and Canadians,
- (c) to recognize the service of reservists deployed in international and domestic operations of the Canadian Forces, and
- (d) to honour the sacrifices of former reservists and those being made by current reservists and their families.

To do this, it might be a simple thing. Maybe it's the first step of getting some recognition and awareness in a more fulsome manner, for folks at home and abroad to understand the contributions that the reservists and their families do for our communities and abroad, that "the last Saturday of September in each year is to be known as Reservists' Recognition Day."

The interesting thing: my father-in-law was a former airborne. He was a doc. That's kind of where he got his training in the military. His brother Steve was also in the Canadian air force and then became a pharmacist. My brother Fabian himself signed up and became a naval reservist. I have a bunch of folks, relations back east. One of my second cousins is up on Arctic operations right now in one of the newly crafted frigates that the Canadian navy has. We've got all of these folks that we deal with that are friends, family, neighbours, and otherwise.

Projects. I ran across so many people in the military context who, when they finish, come and work on major projects. If you want people who can rapidly deploy, adapt, overcome challenges, you give me anybody who's been through a military training program any given day of the week. We think we whine and we cry because, you know, it might be raining outside, but these guys have other things, other forces trying to disrupt everything they do, from simply setting up a camp to fuel supplies.

Glen Brooks was a guy that I ran across. He actually did our camps for us, a former Aussie airborne. His wife is from Spain, and they decided to move to Canada and become citizens here. They're raising a family out there. Glen's role in our projects was to set up the camps, 700,000-man camps, put it up and together. Coincidentally, when Fort McMurray had their major fire, the Mariana camps: that was Glen Brooks letting people come in and getting them off the highways, giving them a place to stay.

When we're talking military personnel, reservists still participating in communities, that's part of it. Where would we be in the Slave Lake fires if we didn't have our reservists to draw on, to come up there and help us out with firefighting activities?

I was really happy to hear the Minister of Advanced Education talk about, well, in essence, transferable skill sets, recognizing skill sets when we're looking at trades, when we're looking at training. Training in the military: it doesn't necessarily correlate or transition over as it is currently, and we need to recognize those skills and those attributes, Minister, to make sure that those folks can transition both in and out and act as a lily pad, if you would, a stepping stone, whether it's a reservist going into full-time reg forces or coming out or being somewhere in between. Again, these folks give up tons of time to serve their country and to serve our communities.

One of the programs that I came across was a program called WithYouWithMe. It was actually launched out of Australia, and for not-for-profits it's the largest tech company in South Asia. Like, this thing is going crazy. The whole thing was started by a couple of former military folks that didn't have those transferable skill sets – well, weren't recognized. When this one gentleman, Luke*, was actually working for a company, he was overperforming in the sense that he was going out and grabbing clients and personnel. What he ended up doing was making a petition to the Australian government, essentially saying that they weren't recognizing all the training that they had with the military folks and that they were really good in cybersecurity. The way that he proved that is because he hacked into their system. At that point they kind of understood they had some holes out there, and then they recognized it. So former Lieutenant Colonel Caleb Walker is now in Ottawa helping this group in Canada transition both reservists and reg forces into programming, coding, all that high-tech stuff, and doing that.

Ben Klick was another gentleman I ran across. The sniping community is pretty small, but as far as Canada, we punch way above our weight class. Ben Klick, one of the few pathfinders that we have, was also a master sniper in the Canadian military for a number of years, kept that close-knit community together. When we go out and we do training, he's bringing in current operators in that environment plus folks that have transitioned out of that and also are current reservists, so, again, being that lily pad, how they transition back and forth.

A lot of the supports that we need are really – there is a small fraternity out there, and they have a brotherhood; it's a camaraderie. Unless you get invited in or unless we make the effort to reach out, it will still be one of those select groups, but these are folks that are friends, neighbours. They may or may not even tell you about their service experience, they may or may not tell you all the challenges that their families go through, but with Edmonton being literally, you know, the home of a big military base and a former air force

base, we have these folks there all around us, every single day of the week. Now, again, it's not boiling the ocean, but it's going some way to start that recognition of how integrated that military community is out there.

Rick Bealoyd*. I mentioned here a little bit earlier about one of the gentlemen that I'd gone to college with. Well, Rick was full on army at the time. He was transferred over into reservists, was going to college, and then taking those skill sets that he had learned in the military and transferring it over into another field.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Bruce Pickford and his sons Steven and Ferron. I won't say their last names because they could be somewhere on deployment right now. Of where they're at: I don't want to talk about that and mess things up.

The other one, too, is these little air tours that we were up to this summer, popping across to different communities, bringing in airplanes. You wouldn't believe the fraternity that's out there, too, for air force. We had the air show out there. I could literally pick up the phone right now and give you the number for the guy who manages all the Canadian military assets. Any single thing that you want – Minister, if you wanted to fly an F-18 over Wetaskiwin, I could give you the guy's number pretty quick. Then we've got former and current demonstrator pilots for our programs that were out there.

The integration, also, for the reservists not just in the Canadian context but as far as a NATO force. This summer I got to meet the Red Devils. They were going to throw a politician out of a perfectly good airplane overtop of . . . [interjection] Yeah, just a little thing for consequence and managing things out. We needed a three-star Canadian general to get ahold of a three-star U.S. general to allow them to have a C-130 Herc overtop of a foreign country, being us, to throw out foreign nationals and other military, being the Red Devils, and this elected official overtop of an airspace.

At the same time that this was taking place, Afghanistan was busting loose. So when these guys are getting text messages about their brothers in arms going over there, trying to get civilians out, there is a reason why there were a few delays when this military complex is working. Reservists are one hundred per cent part of that. There are not only the combat engineers, the communications and signal officers, the battle brigades, the mechanics, all the logistics: these are folks that can punch in and out. And then, Minister of Advanced Education, too, those different pathways and streams: the reservists have opportunities as well to take formalized education, and we have to make sure that that's recognized.

I'm really proud of the fact that we've done a bunch of things to tie in. I'm not going to berate or keep going on and on about all the good things that – you know, like the \$200,000 grant that we have in the skilled trades that we're working towards. We don't have to go on about how we show up and wave the flag every November 11. It goes more than that. The recognition of our military families, the recognition of reservists: those are the ones that really are kind of the glue that holds the two worlds together. As my father-in-law, who is former airborne, had mentioned, to put it in context, it wasn't the full-time soldiers that won the war in World War II. It was the farmers, it was the pharmacists, it was the schoolteachers, and it was the people that stepped out of their daily lives as a voluntary army, essentially the reserve, that got the job done.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll cede my time to anyone else who wants to talk about the great things we're doing. I really want to thank the Member for Leduc-Beaumont for bringing this forward and for all the work he does on our behalf, showing our recognition, from everyone in this Chamber – both sides, nonpartisan – and how much we respect that military community.

Thank you.

4:30

The Chair: Are there members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is indeed an honour to rise in this House. In fact, it's been a little while since I've been able to join debate, and as I like to do, I'd just acknowledge the fact that we are indeed still in the midst of a global pandemic. I want to give a huge shout-out to folks who are working on the front lines right now, including health care workers but also folks working in retail and education and – I might as well because it's quite timely, of course – folks who are in the military, on the front lines as well.

You know, it's pretty disheartening, I think, to hear the comments from the member opposite being quite critical of us, unfairly, of course, because I could certainly list countless examples of events where no UCP MLAs showed up, and I wouldn't have enough time in the day to speak to that. But I was proud to speak on Bill 207, gosh, all the way back in April, and speak about our support for this bill. I shared my own slight connection to the military, and it's quite timely. I was an air cadet in Barrhead, Alberta, 526 Barrhead squadron, and spent a lot of Remembrance Days out marching in the snow, in the cold, standing at the cenotaph. I remember standing at the cenotaph for what felt like hours, and as a kid I think that was a really good, very eye-opening experience because what we endured as air cadets is incredibly insignificant compared to what folks who serve experience.

I talked a lot about the fact that that experience, the member opposite talking about Hercs and whatnot – I can tell you a lot about various aircraft I've actually flown. I've flown a glider. I've flown in a Herc, in a couple of different helicopters, and a few other things, so pretty interesting times. I'll actually reflect just on the fact that when we were in that role, when I was in the role of being an air cadet, we got to work with a number of folks who were reservists and who were veterans, and I even still remember some folks who were serving members of the military as well who volunteered their time with those cadets in Barrhead, Alberta.

I reflect on that time fondly because I learned a lot as an air cadet. Not only did I learn how to tie a tie – I can tell you that I still remember the four-in-hand knot, the Windsor, the half Windsor – and it's come in handy although I'm not wearing a tie today. So if any of you members need advice on tying ties, I am here for you. But, all joking aside, honestly, the leadership skills that I acquired I think were pretty foundational. In fact, it's almost full circle because I had a person from, actually, not an air cadet squadron but an army cadet squadron here in Edmonton reach out and ask me to speak and just talk about my journey with them in the new year. I thought, you know, that that's pretty neat, to be able to say that I'm now a politician and that as a cadet you can take many different routes. Anyways, I know that's a little bit tangential to the bill in front of us, but I think it's all relevant.

I just want to note that we've had an opportunity in this House to attempt to try to speak to some of our other private members' bills, and I just need to get on the record that we didn't get a chance to speak to my colleague's bill, which addressed PTSD. Gosh, perhaps "irony" isn't the correct word, you know, the irony in the fact that the members opposite quashed our attempts to speak to that bill to, instead, speak to this bill. Again, we're not debating the importance of this bill, but the intricate relationship between PTSD and folks who've served our country is a significant one. I would just hope that, moving forward, the members opposite allow us the opportunity to speak to the bills. As we've said and as I've said on the record many times, as private members, in particular, we don't get a lot of opportunities to introduce legislation and to speak to

topics that are of incredible importance to us, often personally. I want this government to very much consider that moving forward.

This is where there was some misinterpretation and some, gosh, misrepresenting of the truth from members opposite saying that we were, you know, over here yelling and screaming – certainly, I don't think I've ever yelled or screamed in this Chamber – and that we were not supportive of this. We've been very clear. Go back through *Hansard*. My colleague from St. Albert was called out incorrectly, being told by the Advanced Education minister that she wasn't supportive. I want to just reiterate it so that it's absolutely clear for *Hansard*. Her point – and it's a good one – is that recognition is absolutely critical. Yes, we want to recognize and acknowledge reservists and all folks who contribute to our military, but we need to ensure that there are other supports in place for them – right? – whether it be investments in mental health, in housing so that when folks who've served overseas or that supported missions overseas come back, they have that suite of supports. That requires government intentional investments. That's our point there.

Okay. With that, I'm getting beckoned to wrap up here, and I will cede my time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 207?

If not, it looks like I shall call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 207 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 207.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Stephan: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 207. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

Motions Other than Government Motions

Water Allocations for Headwater Tributaries

519. Ms Sweet moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take any necessary steps to maintain the current water allocations for the headwater tributaries of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, including the Oldman River Basin Water Allocation Order (Alberta regulation 319/2003), pending extensive consultations with

the agricultural sector, indigenous communities, ranchers, municipal districts, and the general public.

Mr. Neudorf moved that the motion be amended as follows:

- (a) by striking out “take any necessary steps” and substituting “continue its ongoing work”;
- (b) by striking out “pending extensive consultations” and substituting “, and recognize that no decision on changes to water allocations will be considered without extensive consultations”;
- (c) by adding “industry,” immediately after “the agricultural sector,”;
- (d) by striking out “the general public” and substituting “Albertans”.

Mr. Schmidt moved that the amendment be amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:

- (a) by striking out “the current water allocations” and substituting “water allocations current to May 1, 2020”.

[Debate adjourned on the subamendment June 14: Mr. Schow speaking]

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on Motion Other than Government Motion 519, brought forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning. Put simply, it's been a bit of time since this Assembly has considered this government motion, so I just wanted to provide a little bit of context. I believe we're currently debating a subamendment to an amendment brought by the government.

Overall, this motion was intended to

urge the government to take any necessary steps to maintain the current water allocations for the headwater tributaries of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains . . . pending extensive consultations with the agricultural sector, indigenous communities, ranchers, municipal districts, and the general public.

The purpose, Madam Speaker, of this motion is, simply put, that Albertans have heard loud and clear that they cannot trust this current government when it comes to protecting the eastern slopes of our Rockies, the headwaters, which form the basis of our irrigation system, the drinking water in those areas, and actually not just in those areas. We know that what happens on the eastern slopes of the Rockies affects all Albertans, and in fact we all know that because we've all heard about it extensively from our constituents.

Protecting those headwaters and the water allocations in those headwaters is really a concern that has been raised because we have seen the complete disregard with which this current government has treated our most precious natural resources, something we are most proud of in Alberta, proud because of their majestic beauty but also because of the way they serve our industries, our economy, ranchers, farmers, serve our Indigenous communities, and that's our Rocky Mountains and the eastern slopes in particular.

This government's decision to pursue coal mining on the eastern slopes of the Rockies has – “alarmed” isn't quite a strong enough word, Madam Speaker, for how Albertans have reacted to the steps that this current government has taken. I know I still to this day continue to receive in my constituency office message after message from Albertans concerned about this government's intent to pursue coal mining on the eastern slopes.

They don't trust this government when they've now tried to put a pause on things and are doing a review where they keep saying that

they want to consult with and hear from Albertans although I cannot think, Madam Speaker, of an issue on which there has been more overwhelming consensus from Albertans of all political stripes, from all regions and areas of this province than there has been on the issue of coal development in the eastern Rockies. Overwhelmingly, Albertans have already spoken. Not only is this exercise in consultation unnecessary, to some extent, but it is also a symptom, again, of how the people of Alberta can't trust this government on this, because we know that they're trying to spin this, as they have spun so many other things, and that they are continuing to pursue this agenda.

They have only retreated at any point because of the overwhelming response from Albertans to say: we need to protect our eastern slopes. This motion, brought forward by my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, speaks specifically to the water allocation issue of the headwaters in the eastern slopes. Again, this is an issue where the trust with Albertans has been broken by this government, and they don't actually believe – I've heard the minister of environment stand up and claim that they're not making water allocation changes, but they've said the same thing, that they're not supporting coal mining, that they're not selling off parks. All these things that they claim they aren't doing all turned out to be true. They were doing all those things. When it comes to the water allocation, we need to be clear in this Assembly that there should be no changes to the water allocations without absolute consultation, extensive consultation, and that all necessary steps will be taken to maintain the current water allocations.

We've seen that the government members have put forward an amendment to say that they want to strike out the term "take any necessary steps" and substitute it with "continue its ongoing work." Again, I will highlight that Albertans do not trust the work that this government is doing to protect their eastern slopes, and now the subamendment brought forward is simply to be very clear that we're not just talking about the government's interpretation of what "current water allocations" means. Again, that is a matter up for dispute. We've seen this government play games with terminology and semantics, and maybe when they say "current," they mean current as of a totally different date. They might make all the changes to the water allocations and then say: oh, we meant up until today's date. So this subamendment is meant to be very clear that when we're trying to preserve the water allocations, we're talking about water allocations current to May 1, 2020.

That was when Albertans heard that there were a lot of proposed changes coming from this government about the eastern slopes. That's when they proved that they were actually more than willing to dig up our eastern slopes and jeopardize our water quality, that they did not talk to ranchers, Indigenous communities, to farmers, to municipalities in those areas. They certainly didn't talk to Albertans.

So we need to be very clear that we need to preserve the water allocations as of May 1, 2020. That is the purpose of this subamendment that has been brought forward by my colleague, one that I wholeheartedly support and I urge all the other members to support as well. I think we need to be very clear with this government, more so than probably any other government before it, because of how much they have broken the trust.

We've heard the games that are played. We see it happening in every single initiative, review, inquiry they do. We've already seen some significant spinning by this government that actually contradicts – for example, on the Allan inquiry, the actual report says one thing, but we hear government saying something else about the amount of money that apparently went to target anti oil sands initiatives. We have members of the government caucus who are simply misstating information that is plainly available to Albertans and expecting them to believe it.

It seems that this government just continues to not understand how important transparency, accountability, and trust are. Every single step of the way we have to be extra vigilant as Albertans. Now we have to be extra vigilant as an Official Opposition to hold this government to account because they cannot be trusted.

I encourage all the members of this House to support this subamendment in order to be very clear that we're talking about current water allocations as of May 1, 2020. We're not interested in the changes that they have made since then because there's still some very strong evidence to suggest that they have been making changes to water allocations, that more of that water will be designated towards general use purposes, which can include industrial purposes, which could include coal production, which is of significant concern to all Albertans.

This subamendment is trying to be very clear and hold the government to account, and I can see no reason why a government who should be very focused, laser focused, as they like to say, on rebuilding trust – this is a very simple subamendment. I hope the members on all sides of this Assembly will vote in support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder, as we go through this new learning process, that interventions are not allowed during private members' time and definitely not in committee.

On that note, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Madam Speaker, I request unanimous consent to continue debate on Motion Other than Government Motion 519.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to add some comments around Motion Other than Government Motion 519. I will, of course, start by thanking my good friend from Edmonton-Manning for bringing this forward, addressing an issue that, quite frankly, I've never seen such a focused effort on by Albertans to send a very, very quick message to this government.

Of course, you know, the reason we've brought forward the subamendment to the one that was introduced by the government is because, quite honestly, it's an attempt to – and pun intended, Madam Speaker – water down the original motion. To see Indigenous communities, farmers, ranchers, municipalities, the major cities come together and say, "Do not mess with our drinking water," I mean, why would you want to do that? That very clearly is not working in your best interests.

You know, to potentially contaminate the eastern slopes headwaters, which ultimately feeds, I believe, a good portion of southern Alberta and the farmlands down there – and, you know, with all the challenges that they already have around drought and water allocations, we then want to consider potentially poisoning that water that they will use for irrigation, that feeds Albertans and Canadians and possibly others throughout the world?

4:50

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Through this subamendment we're at the very least trying to reduce what the original amendment is trying to achieve, so my hope is that members of the Chamber will remember, quite frankly, the outrage. I know you've read it because I was copied on those e-mails as well. You know, I've received those phone calls. I've seen

the tweets. I've seen the posts. I've seen the tagging of everybody: do not do this.

You know, it's too bad that we haven't had the opportunity to debate the private member's bill that the Leader of the Opposition brought forward because it addresses some of these things around coal mining right in the very heart of where our drinking water comes from.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, it's interesting. When I talk to people and we talk about how they actually care about the environment, they want their parks pristine. They want their drinking water uncontaminated. They want their air to be as clean as it can be to breathe. For a government to ignore that – I mean, it's easy enough to dismiss a small handful of people that are maybe opposed to something, but like I was mentioning, when you see Indigenous communities coming together and going, “Not only slam on the brakes; throw out the boat anchor, attach the rope to the piano, toss that off as well, and aim for the nearest brick wall that you can find and stop,” I don't know how else to better explain the message that I'm certainly getting. I know my colleagues have received this. You have to be receiving it as well. Like I've said, I've been copied on these e-mails and the phone calls and the signs on lawns and things like that.

At the very least with the subamendment, by attaching at least a date to it, water allocations current to May 1, 2020 – I remember, you know, talking with a few members across the way and the struggles, of course, this year that the farmers have encountered with the droughts and whatnot down south, and frankly I was astonished. I mean, I knew they were having a hard time, but I really didn't fully understand what it was that they were challenged with. To sit here and open it up to allow the allocations of water to just basically go anywhere, you are essentially telling the farmers and ranchers that feed Albertans, that feed Canadians, that potentially feed the world that you're not interested in what they have to say. You're not prepared to heed the warnings that they're giving to you and the consequences that it'll potentially cause.

You know, I used to always hear in the 29th Legislature about the unintended consequences. I remember getting just banged over the head with that line, Madam Speaker: the unintended consequences. The funny thing is that it's not me that's trying to warn you about this. It's Indigenous communities that are warning you. Farmers and ranchers are warning you. Municipalities right in the mountains and foothills themselves are warning you. Your two major cities are warning you. You have to pause and take that seriously.

You know, my friend from Edmonton-Gold Bar, I mean, talking about the coal leases and whatnot, and my friend from Edmonton-Whitemud talked about pausing all of that. Government went: oh, no, we've heard, and we've paused it. But have you paused it? No, not quite. We've still got some stuff going around here in the background, so that's not actually pausing. That's just saying: well, we're just going to kind of try to keep on going over here.

I don't know. Are you waiting so that maybe all of these groups, all of these Albertans, the country music stars stepping up and creating songs about this, are just going to kind of – what? – disappear, and nobody is going to notice? And then: “There we are, we're in. Let's start getting all this stuff going” so that we start to interfere with something just as simple as Albertans' drinking water.

I'm very thankful that my friend from Edmonton-Manning has brought this motion. She sees it. She's listened to the stakeholders. She's listened to Albertans. Man, she's told me about the e-mails that she's getting, the phone calls around this, people bending her

ear, saying, you know: please, can you do something? That something here is Motion 519.

My hope is that with the subamendment we'll try to, as I said earlier, take an amendment that's trying to water down the motion and maybe not water it down quite so much. But I don't know. I just have this nagging feeling, Madam Speaker. I certainly would never presuppose the decision of the House. I would never ever do that, but I just have this nagging feeling that I think my words are going to go unheard. [A timer sounded]

The Deputy Speaker: Interesting timing.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to add my voice to the debate today on Motion 519. Certainly, I just also want to thank very much my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, who has done extensive work on this motion, and it's a very important motion. I commend all members of this House to, you know, look very deeply at it and see what significant benefits there'd be to Albertans if this was voted in favour of.

Right now we're on subamendment SA1. Certainly, overall in this motion we want to maintain the current water allocation for the headwater tributaries of the eastern slopes of the Rockies. More specifically, the subamendment asks to strike out clause (a) and substitute the following:

- (a) by striking out “the current water allocations” and substituting “water allocations current to May 1, 2020”.

Certainly, we want to be specific, so this creates some clarity. I think, you know, all members of the House can see that and see what the importance is of passing this subamendment.

We know, certainly, that Albertans have spoken very clearly about their concerns in this area. You know, in Indigenous communities, farmers and ranchers, municipalities in the mountains and foothills – for example, High River, Clearwater county, and even in Edmonton and Calgary – there have been concerns brought forward by Albertans, and there's really a remarkable consensus on this matter, that we really need to protect the current water allocations and not shift them, as seems to be what this UCP government wants to do.

5:00

Certainly, for people who work with the land, farmers and ranchers, and in southern Alberta, there are issues with drought. Of course, irrigation is fundamental for the success of any of the crops. I grew up in the north, you know, in the Peace River country, and we didn't ever have any trouble with drought. It was always raining, I remember, and tons of snow. That's not the same thing. Obviously, Alberta is a very diverse province in many ways and certainly geographically. This particular southern part of the province, the eastern slopes, is very – water is essential in that area, and we need to make sure that it is protected. We've seen record droughts this summer, which have shown the importance of making sure that the current water allocations are maintained. Sadly, the UCP has ignored farmers and ranchers regarding the drought.

Also, you know, in that same area are just the concerns regarding coal mining. Certainly, the record is clear. The UCP has certainly ignored and kind of secretly created agreements with coal companies and done a lot of things behind closed doors that people who live on the land, are concerned about our water source are not liking as well as someone who lives in the city, like me, too. I want to make sure that we're treating our environment well, and this UCP government has really had some questionable decisions regarding that. We certainly need to work harder to protect these headwaters.

Bill 214 is our leader's bill. Certainly, irrigation was a significant reason for the creation of Bill 214, the Eastern Slopes Protection Act. This is kind of carrying that concern further in a motion

brought by the Member for Edmonton-Manning. Certainly, we know that irrigation is very important to the agricultural industry, and it's necessary for supporting diversification and investing in Alberta's future. I mean, that's one of the major concerns we know in our province, that we need to have more diversity in our economy so that we're not so vulnerable when there are slumps, for example, in the oil and gas industry. Of course, that's an important sector for us, but we do know that farming, ranching is an important sector. You know, that's what my aunts and uncles – my parents were always town people. They never lived on a farm, but I had lots of cousins who lived all across Alberta. That's kind of the heritage of our province.

You know, certainly, the farming and ranching industry has really struggled over the years, and many people move away from that type of work because it's just not fruitful. There's not enough support, and of course it's very difficult work. Making sure that sort of a fundamental thing like having access to water for irrigation – I mean, I think this motion would provide support to farmers and ranchers in southern Alberta and, again, diversify our economy, keep those farmers and ranchers on the land with their families, keeping that lifestyle alive.

I know that many of my UCP colleagues have many times talked about the importance of that and that type of lifestyle and wanting to preserve it. I mean, not too long ago we had a private member's bill about making rodeo the sport of Alberta, so, you know, that kind of fits all with that. I think that this is something that both sides of the House can agree on. Certainly, as I've said, the members on the opposite side do see the value in that, and many of them are themselves ranchers and farmers.

Current allocations for, you know, the way it is set up now . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hate to interrupt, but Motion 519 has now received sufficient debate. I must now put the question on subamendment SA1, as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:05 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Irwin	Schmidt	Sweet
Nielsen		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Singh
Amery	McIver	Stephan
Dreeshen	Nally	Toews
Fir	Neudorf	Toor
Getson	Nicolaides	Turton
Horner	Reid	van Dijken
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Issik	Savage	Wilson
Jones	Schulz	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 27
---------	---------	--------------

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

The Speaker: Under Standing Order 8(3), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than government

motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate on Motion 519.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to close debate on Motion 519. I'll start off by saying, you know, I shouldn't be surprised that this government would defeat a subamendment to a motion that would actually hold some accountability and transparency for Albertans when specifically it just asked that the government report and ensure that water allocations only went back to May 1, 2020.

Obviously, the government has decided that they're going to make changes. If they didn't, then the issue around substituting and being able to talk about May 1, 2020, wouldn't have been a problem. I think that the members on the opposite side, in the government, may want to reflect on that because it's going to obviously have some serious impact on their relationship with their own constituents that are going to be impacted by the southern slope.

What is their answer to Albertans that reside on the southern slope that aren't going to have that openness and the transparency about what water allocations are being made and what changes are being made to those water allocations post May 1? As my colleagues have mentioned and as the minister might want to listen to and be aware of, there are serious concerns when it comes to the water table in southern Alberta and how the southern slope changes are going to be impacting agriculture and even forestry. We know this because if the minister – and the minister might know this if he'd actually travelled around southern Alberta this summer during the drought. He would have heard that there isn't enough water in the dugouts, that many of the wells have dried up, that many of our ranchers don't know how they're going to be able to provide water to their livestock over the winter.

We haven't had a lot of moisture. There was a little bit of snow over the last few days, which is a hopeful sight before, obviously, freeze sets in and the water won't be able to be absorbed the way that we would like it to, but we haven't heard, Albertans haven't heard, I haven't heard from the minister of agriculture about what the future plan is around water allocation as we move forward into the winter months. How do we see and how do ranchers and our farmers know what their future will look like when it comes to next year's harvest, to ensuring that there's going to be a drought plan in the future when it comes to water allocation and they're going to be able to provide the supports that they need to their livestock?

I would have liked to have heard the minister stand up and talk about the drought this summer and about what is going on and how the changes to the water allocation over the last year have had impacts on the plans for irrigation networks, whether or not there are going to be plans around water conservation, how we're going to support our livestock breeders, how we're going to be able to support our dryland producers in the south. Right now we haven't heard anything. The minister hasn't spoken about this motion whatsoever.

It's a pretty serious motion. It impacts the whole economic prosperity of southern Alberta, yet silence. Silence from any of the members that actually represent those areas, that represent the areas of Pincher Creek; that represent Lethbridge; Medicine Hat; Nanton, Alberta. The members won't speak about it. Why won't they speak about it? Because they know that this government is not being open, is not being transparent, and is not actually making any plans.

Yet we see the minister of agriculture and the Minister of Indigenous Relations laughing about it. That's how seriously they're taking water. That's how seriously this issue matters to this government, when we see ministers laughing. We can hear them across the floor. [interjections] Now they're heckling me because

they're so scared of talking about this issue that they want to deflect. They don't want to be held accountable. They don't want to be held accountable for the decisions they're making, and they're ignoring the stress that these farmers and ranchers have been facing over the last six months.

There's no drought plan. This government hasn't even talked about a future drought plan. This government hasn't talked about what the future of water will look like for the farmers and ranchers that are asking for help. I mean, if the minister wants to keep talking about it across the floor, maybe the question could be answered. What's the water plan for our livestock producers over the winter? What's going to happen? Nothing. Absolutely nothing, and that should be a concern for all Albertans.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:28 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Singh
Amery	McIver	Stephan
Dreeshen	Nally	Toews
Fir	Neudorf	Toor
Getson	Nicolaides	Turton
Horner	Reid	van Dijken
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Issik	Savage	Wilson
Jones	Schulz	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
------	----------	---------------

Irwin	Schmidt	Sweet
Nielsen		
Totals:	For – 27	Against – 7

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 519 as amended carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:44 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Lovely	Singh
Amery	McIver	Stephan
Dreeshen	Nally	Toews
Fir	Neudorf	Toor
Getson	Nicolaides	Turton
Horner	Reid	van Dijken
Hunter	Rosin	Walker
Issik	Savage	Wilson
Jones	Schulz	Yaseen

Against the motion:

Dang	Pancholi	Sigurdson, L.
Irwin	Schmidt	Sweet
Nielsen		

Totals:	For – 27	Against – 7
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion Other than Government Motion 519 as amended carried]

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	5835
Members' Statements	
Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction.....	5835
Government Policies	5835
Economic Recovery and Growth.....	5835
Support for Agriculture	5836
Diwali	5836
COVID-19 Response.....	5836
Surgery Wait Times.....	5837
Environmental Policies.....	5837
COVID-19 Response Conflict and Contention.....	5837
Oral Question Period	
COVID-19 Vaccines for Children	5837
COP 26 Climate Change Conference	5838
Postsecondary Tuition Fees	5839
Provincial Police Force Feasibility Study.....	5839
Economic Recovery and Diversification	5840
Workplace Conduct of Ministers and Staff	5840
Jobs Now Program	5841
Canadian COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination COVID-19 Restrictions Exemption Program	5841
Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant Program.....	5842
Paid Sick Leave during COVID-19 Pandemic	5842
Economic Recovery and Labour Supply	5843
Oil and Gas Well Site Reclamation	5843
Drug Overdose Prevention	5844
Labour Supply in Southern Alberta.....	5844
Statement by the Speaker	
Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Campaign.....	5845
Notices of Motions	5845
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 78 Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021	5845
Tabling Returns and Reports	5846
Tablings to the Clerk	5846
Orders of the Day	5846
Motions for Concurrence in Committee Reports on Public Bills Other than Government Bills	
Bill 215 Seniors Advocate Act.....	5846
Bill 218 Provincial Parks (Protecting Park Boundaries) Amendment Act, 2021	5849
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 207 Reservists' Recognition Day Act.....	5850
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Water Allocations for Headwater Tributaries	5859
Division	5862
Division	5863

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca