



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 30, 2021

Day 134

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

Party standings:

United Conservative: 20

New Democrat: 24

Independent: 2

Vacant: 1

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Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk
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
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	Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and 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
Jackie Lovely	Parliamentary Secretary to the Associate Minister of Status of Women
Nathan Neudorf	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Parks for Water Stewardship
Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services for Civil Society
Searle Turton	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy
Dan Williams	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Culture and for la Francophonie

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

Select Special Information and Privacy Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Walker
Deputy Chair: Mr. Turton

Allard
Carson
Dang
Dreeshen
Ganley
Long
Stephan

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.

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Legislative Assembly Chamber's 110th Anniversary

The Speaker: Prior to the daily Routine, it is an auspicious occasion today. It was on this day in 1911 that one of the headlines in the *Edmonton Journal* read: Society Out in Full Force at First Day of Third Session of Second Legislature. Here we are 110 years later, on the 130th day of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature, and you may be wondering what all this excitement is about, I'm sure. The *Edmonton Bulletin* painted a vivid picture of what it was like 110 years ago, when this Chamber opened its doors for the very first time. If you close your eyes, I'm sure you can picture it.

The [assembly] at the opening was a brilliant one. On the floor of the House, besides the members, the Speaker and [the] officers, chairs were placed for wives and friends of ministers and members and distinguished [guests]. The galleries on the right and left, open to the public, were crowded to their capacity. The Speaker's gallery, to which admission was by ticket was also crowded. The stately legislature chamber, brilliantly illuminated by a thousand electric lights, presented an aspect worthy of the notable occasion of the first meeting of the Legislature in the new capitol building.

While the architecture of the room may not have changed much since that first opening day, the people working within the walls have certainly progressed. During the Second Legislature there were 41 members of the Assembly elected, and none of them were women. Today the 87 members of this Assembly are as diverse as the people across Alberta that we're elected to represent. In recognition of the 110th anniversary I encourage you to explore the new section on the Assembly website highlighting the history of the Chamber and some of the symbols here in this Chamber. Only 956 Albertans have ever been elected to serve in this Chamber. I consider it an honour on this particular day to be here with each and every one of you.

Members' Statements

Government Policies and Families

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, as a new father I have learned just how it feels to want to provide for your child and your family. Of course, we as MLAs have a steady income that has been maintained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Others, including many in my constituency of Edmonton-West Henday, haven't been so lucky. Repeated layoffs, small businesses forced to close permanently, and mountains of bills stacking up on the kitchen counter: that is the reality for so many Albertans.

Yesterday our Official Opposition heard from Lisa Danica, who reports having to close three separate small businesses due to cost increases. She said that her electricity bill shot up 600 per cent and that her insurance increased as well. The UCP removed the cap on both electricity rates and automobile insurance, as you might recall, Mr. Speaker. Lisa said that she and her spouse are considering leaving the province altogether, especially if the Premier follows through with his racist, backwards-looking curriculum.

The problems with this government's harmful policies extend far beyond the immediate. Carrie Ellinger wrote to us and said, quote,

even for those families who are able to currently make ends meet, it means less contributions to retirement savings or education savings for their kids. She added, quote, these are the sort of negative impacts that will be felt for generations in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I worry about the immediate impacts on families who cannot afford to heat their homes and keep their cars on the road, who can't afford to feed their children and are heading to food banks in record numbers. I also fear for the long term, with people taking on more debt than they can manage and some choosing to flee the province once and for all.

I want to tell Albertans that are hurting that while this UCP government may not care about them, we do, and Alberta's NDP will keep fighting for every single one of them every single day.

Thank you.

Provincial Fiscal Update

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board presented the mid-year fiscal update and economic statement. This positive update is another reason for Albertans to be optimistic. It demonstrates that Alberta's economic recovery continues and that our recovery plan is working, resulting in increased revenues and a decreased deficit. In fact, the minister announced that revenue for 2021-22 is forecast at \$57.9 billion, \$14.2 billion higher than the budget and \$2.9 billion higher than the last update. The deficit is forecast at \$5.8 billion, which is a whopping \$12.4 billion lower than the budget estimate and nearly \$2 billion lower than the last update. These are incredible strides.

The NDP have often tried to say that our government's job-creation tax cut has cost billions in supposed lost revenue, but the job-creation tax cut is working. When the NDP increased the corporate income tax, revenues dropped. Now that we've lowered the rate, corporate income tax revenues are set to increase by 19 per cent per year. Lower taxes encourage economic growth, and economic growth is good for everyone. It's good for businesses, it's good for workers, and it's good for Albertans. We are seeing billions of dollars of new investment and capital coming to Alberta, and it's happening in hydrogen, tech, aerospace, petrochemicals, manufacturing, and many other sectors.

I am proud of the steady hand of this government on our economy and on our finances. While economists and researchers have downgraded economic projections for all provinces over the last few months, many forecasters, including the Conference Board of Canada and several major banks, predict that Alberta will lead the nation in economic growth in 2022. Alberta is experiencing a broad economic recovery and diversifying growth, exactly what you would expect from a government supportive of our entrepreneurs, innovators, and job creators, a government obsessed with reducing unnecessary regulatory burden, a government focused on creating the most attractive environment to start or grow a business.

We were sent here to focus on jobs and the economy, and this update confirms that we're on the right path and that we've kept our promise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Addiction Treatment

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red Deer, the city of my youth, where I raised my family and established a law practice, suffered and endured under the NDP. The NDP forced an overdose prevention site on my city, ignoring the concerns of civic leaders, local businesses, and families. Drug sites are an attraction for those

seeking to live in their addictions. Because of the NDP drug site, there are more, not fewer, who are suffering under addiction in Red Deer. The occupation of the NDP on harm reduction was a profound failure. Aiding and abetting individuals in their addictions is not right.

Addiction is a complex challenge of human nature. Success must begin with the end in mind, supporting and loving our neighbours to become free from addictions. This is logical, Mr. Speaker, and to all within the sound of my voice, consider this question: if someone you loved was suffering under a drug addiction, would you take them to a drug site? No. You would love and support them not in living in their addictions but in seeking to become free of them.

November 19 was a red-letter day. We broke ground for an addiction recovery community for Red Deer. This is a principled course correction. The Red Deer recovery community will bless those suffering under addictions as well as healing for their families and their communities. Mr. Speaker, there will be positive, transformable miracles that will occur at this recovery community. I am very excited.

Thank you.

Skilled Trades Education and Funding for Colleges

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, the UCP is imperilling future generations of Alberta students. Since taking office, this government has made it their mission to take as much from and to give as little as possible to postsecondary. Under this government Keyano College in Fort McMurray has had to lay off 93 staff so far this year and had their budget cut by \$3 million, because in times when the government should be supporting this college, it left them stranded.

1:40

Keyano is not the only one, of course. Portage College in Lac La Biche, another postsecondary institution that offers excellent trade programs, is also suffering under this UCP government. Mr. Speaker, Portage is one of the few schools that has a mandate to educate people from northeastern Alberta. Since the Premier is quick to say that expanding an emphasis on trades would reduce youth unemployment and help the labour market, the irony of slowly killing the very schools who provide these skills is not lost on anyone. This year Portage College had to suspend three programs and reduce its workforce in order to balance its budget after the government mercilessly left them high and dry. These were also trades programs which equipped students who wished to be heavy-equipment operators and other similar careers.

Targeting institutions like Portage will also have devastating effects on Alberta's rural communities. Colleges are a vital part of the local economy for dozens of towns and cities across Alberta. When colleges like Portage and Keyano get cut, everyone suffers. When will this government understand that cuts like this hurt ordinary rural Albertans while other decisions, like a \$4.7 billion corporate tax giveaway, only help the rich and the powerful? Are they really so blind to these issues in their own province? These colleges are absolutely critical to the future of our province, and they need to be supported.

The Speaker: Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Victor Ringuette

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On November 8 the Ringuette family of Bonnyville lost a husband, a father, and a grandfather. Alberta and my local community lost a great man, a great friend, and entrepreneur. If you've driven a highway in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or B.C., chances are you've seen a B. & R. Eckel's Transport truck. More importantly, if you've attended a local

hospital gala, sporting event, or fundraiser, you've seen the ever-present B. & R. Eckel's placards or the famous custom-made four-burner tandem barbecue that was a staple at many community events over the years, complete with B. & R. staff to do the cooking.

Victor Ringuette founded the company that would become B. & R. Eckel's on March 1, 1965. During prime times in our province that company boasted over 500 employees, with 14 depots across Alberta. Currently the company employs over 420 people, with a fleet of 400 power units and 975 trailing equipment units. When asked about his success, the humble Victor always gave the credit to his wife, Greta.

Victor was a man with a big heart that believed in giving back to the community. According to his daughter Roxanne he told his family: you support the community that supports you. It did not matter if you were a school sports team, a local sporting event, 4-H, a food bank, or a friendship centre; people tell me they could always count on support from Victor. When asked why he was so generous and supportive of community events, he answered sincerely: because I can. If you attended the Calgary Stampede chuckwagon races, a sport he was very fond of, or the very popular B. & R. breakfast, his support for what truly makes Alberta great was obvious.

To Greta, Victor's four children, and his 11 grandchildren: thank you for sharing him with us. I know he will be missed most by you. Our entire province is better off from his time here, and we are forever grateful. He was a great Albertan.

Thank you.

Hunting

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, hunting has grown more popular in Alberta throughout the past two decades. Almost 120,000 hunting licences were bought in 2019, nearly 35,000 more than were purchased in 2005. In fact, Alberta is the only jurisdiction in North America where hunting participation has seen a long-term upwards trend. Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have hit tourism industries hard around the world and in Alberta have created a particularly difficult year for those who enjoy hunting.

Their concerns seem to be only growing. Since the Alberta Fish and Game Association learned about the government's renewed attempt to legalize hunt farms, they've been bringing up their concerns to the government since January, only to be ignored. Mr. Speaker, chronic wasting disease, which is currently spreading rapidly through the prairies, is thought to have originated on a hunting farm, yet the government has consulted no experts on the environmental impact of this decision that they're covertly working on.

Outside of the whole suite of ecological, economic, and heritage reasons that they have, they're even more concerned because the government is not being transparent about their intentions. This lack of consultation with relevant stakeholders is a colossal failure of good governance. Mr. Speaker, academics, fair game hunting organizations, and environmentalists all agree that game farms damage native wildlife through hybridization and the spread of disease, and they want to be involved in the discussion. They're concerned that this mentality of paying to hunt goes against the very identity of Albertans because it degrades the value, need, and importance of what it means to be a hunter.

Mr. Speaker, by ignoring so many different important stakeholders, the government is also ignoring thousands of Albertans who enjoy hunting and who have to face the consequences of any negative impacts, all because the government did not think it important to ask them for their opinions. The government must be inclusive and collaborative when considering these changes.

Albertans deserve to know that they are being heard and that their voices matter.

Thank you.

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

Economic Corridors Task Force

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The establishment of economic corridors was a recommendation of the Fair Deal Panel and an action item in Alberta's economic recovery plan. Premiers of all provinces agree that the corridors are of vital importance to the country as a whole. It's been an honour to lead the task force on this important item. As the chair I've been able to work with an amazing team of Albertans to unlock not only the economic potential of Alberta but all of northwest Canada.

I'd like to thank my fellow MLAs from Drayton Valley-Devon, Airdrie-Cochrane, Calgary-North for being part of the team as well as the following Albertans, who stepped up to volunteer their time, their experience, and their insight. North team, Treaty 8 territory: Councillor Lisa Wardley, Ms Dana Severson, Mr. Ron Quintal. Central team, Treaty 6 territory: Mr. Tom Raptis, Chief Billy Morin, Chief Leonard Standingontheroad, Mr. Fred Gallagher, and Ms Diana McQueen. South team, Treaty 6 territory, consisted of Mr. Tom Fransham, Professor Kent Fellows, Mr. Darwin Durnie, Chief Roy Whitney, and Chief Roy Fox.

I'd also like to thank all the local communities, chambers, the RMA and AUMA members, industry partners, and First Nations communities for being part of the process. I'd like to thank representatives from the Northwest Territories, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Canada Infrastructure Bank, port authorities, railroad companies, airport authorities, and the Canadian Coast Guard.

You see, Mr. Speaker, economic corridors will pull our countries together. They'll correct the logistic challenges; moreover, they have a real positive social impact on communities all across the northwest. Working together, we can unlock the economic potential that will impact generations to come. I look forward to bringing the recommendations on the rail capacity for the province, the supply chain corrections, the formalization of actual economic corridors, and the establishment of a corridor authority that would extend over and into port authorities. The formalization of economic corridors will be a key to our economic future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Brooks-Medicine Hat Constituents

Mrs. Frey: Mr. Speaker, Brooks-Medicine Hat has so much to be proud of. Whether it's our wealth of agricultural opportunity, potential for burgeoning investment, or our rich history of natural resource development, we have the best story to tell. While all of those things are great, I'd have to argue that our best resource is the people, the generous, hard-working, kind, and dedicated community members of Brooks-Medicine Hat.

During the constituency break I had the opportunity to go to Mr. Lube, where owner Chris Hellman was giving away his annual free oil changes for veterans and those who are actively serving our country.

There's also my friend Sarah McKenzie, who launched a Believe Women campaign, which raised money for the Medicine Hat women's shelter and SARC to support survivors of sexual violence, harassment, and abuse. Her campaign was so successful, Mr. Speaker, that for the first time she's had to put in another order.

There's also Frank Gilham, who's an active member of the community that serves people living with disabilities. I'm proud to

say that his dedication and hard work is being recognized by the Minister of Community and Social Services as well as the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities with the McPherson award.

There's Ethan, who's in grade 6, and Lauren, who's in grade 12, who spent their time creating beautiful pieces of art to be featured on the Brooks-Medicine Hat Christmas card this year. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that these pieces are so beautiful you'd think they belong in an exhibit.

Finally, there's a very special person who's pretty close to my heart, a second-year nursing student who is connecting local seniors with government services and the help that they need. Her name is Shawn Glasgo, and I'm lucky enough to call her my baby sister. She was just recognized by the *Medicine Hat News* for her efforts, and I'm so, so proud of her.

When you have constituents and community leaders like mine, Mr. Speaker, it makes this job pretty easy. Recognizing them is just the least that I could do. I want to thank the constituents of Brooks-Medicine Hat for giving me so much to brag about and for the opportunity to be their MLA. People like them are who inspire me daily and all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statement by the Speaker

Parliamentary Secretaries

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to proceeding to Oral Question Period, I would like to make a brief statement about some remarks that were made yesterday during Oral Question Period that I elected to not highlight at the time, but I think it's important to do so now – the Oral Question Period timer will begin at the conclusion of my remarks – specifically referring to an exchange between the Member for Lethbridge-East, the newly minted parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Environment and Parks for water stewardship, and the said Minister of Environment and Parks. This exchange can be found in *Alberta Hansard* for November 29, 2021, at page 6545.

1:50

As members know, a number of parliamentary secretaries have been appointed recently. In recent memory these positions have also been called parliamentary assistants and legislative secretaries, but since the holders of these positions are not members of Executive Council – in other words, they are private members – in general they may still continue to ask questions of the government during Oral Question Period. Of course, as they are private members, they may not answer any questions. What is problematic is when a parliamentary secretary asks a question of a minister to whom they are responsible, as was the case yesterday when the Member for Lethbridge-East posed a question to the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Many Alberta Speakers have ruled on this exact circumstance. In particular, Speaker Kowalski ruled on April 16, 2008, and Speaker Wanner ruled on October 30, 2017. It is inappropriate for parliamentary secretaries to direct questions to the minister with whom the parliamentary secretary is affiliated. As Speaker Kowalski noted, "If a parliamentary assistant were to ask questions of the minister with whom he or she works, there might be an expression of discomfort by the chair and undoubtedly from the members throughout." These remarks can be found on page 13 of *Hansard* from April 16, 2008. Accordingly, I would ask all of the newly minted parliamentary secretaries to refrain from posing questions to the minister to which they are responsible.

Oral Question Period

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

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the most important budget is the one that Alberta families write every month. Now, early on in his mandate the Premier broke a promise. He decided that even if inflation drove up the costs of goods and services, he was going to take more of Albertans' income while giving them less in benefits. Example: Jamie is a single mom with four kids. She works retail. Under the Premier's plan she now has \$450 less this Christmas. Is that what being partners in prosperity looks like to this Premier, fewer gifts under the trees?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the single largest tax increase in Alberta history, that raised the price of everything, of food, of groceries, of home heating, of gasoline was imposed by the NDP. They never mentioned it in the 2015 campaign, but they imposed that massive carbon tax grab, which this government eliminated as Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act, and then when we sued the feds over their carbon tax, six provinces backed us up, four of five judges at the Alberta Court of Appeal. But guess who's on the side of Ottawa and against working families? Alberta's NDP.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier's enormous salary means he didn't get a rebate, but the vast majority of Albertans did, so I would stop one percenting himself.

Meanwhile, he knows that this is a hidden tax. His deindexation as well of the seniors' benefit is another example of how he's doing this. Let me explain. Martha and Henry are older now. They're on a fixed income these days, and costs keep going up. This Christmas under the Premier's plan they have \$330 less than two years ago, and next Christmas they will lose \$540. Is that a fair deal, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I think the NDP leader mentioned my salary. I'd like to remind her that I voluntarily took a 10 per cent pay cut, and if she'd like to lead by example, we could table a motion to do the same for the opposition leader. This entire caucus took a 5 per cent pay cut. We are concerned about the cost of living, which is exactly why we repealed the carbon tax. It's why we sued Ottawa over their carbon tax. We are glad to see, with today's fiscal update, that Alberta is leading Canada in economic growth, in job growth, and in income growth.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't cancel anything; all he's doing is sending it out to Ottawa. That's some fight-back strategy.

Now the Premier is taking more and more and more from Albertans every year. It's destructive, it's insidious, and it's hidden: those are the Premier's words. Robert has a severe disability. He's on AISH, but even after rent he can barely stock his fridge. Under the Premier's plan he has \$1,300 less this Christmas, the biggest impact. Premier, is that what Alberta having its swagger back looks like to him, vulnerable Albertans paying the most?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there's been no reduction in AISH benefits, which on average are 40 per cent higher – 40 per cent higher – than the comparable programs across the country. It's true that cost of living is going up, and one of the things that's driving inflation is unlimited increases in government spending. The NDP has never seen a spending hike it didn't approve of. What this government did was to cut the biggest hike in the cost of living in

modern Alberta economic history, which was the NDP carbon tax. Why didn't they back us up when we sued Ottawa over their carbon tax?

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

Health System Capacity

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the UCP is updating the numbers today; perhaps the Premier can update us on the number of Albertans whose surgeries have been cancelled. It goes up every day that we're not at normal capacity, yet every time I ask, it seems like the Premier just doesn't know the answer. Let's hear an update from the Premier on that. How many Albertans' surgeries have been cancelled, the actual number as of today, and what is the plan for those Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, 15,000 surgeries have been postponed. That is the current data. [interjections] I know the NDP opposition doesn't want to listen to the answers. They simply heckle and shout and scream. But what this government is doing is focusing on restoring a full surgical schedule. We're at 82, 83 per cent of full surgical capacity, thanks largely to the efforts of Albertans to get the fourth wave under control. Of course, there's \$900 million added in this year's budget for the surgical initiative that the NDP voted against.

Ms Notley: Well, this Premier continues to intentionally give us the wrong answer. Here's a number worth updating, another one: 60 minutes. That's how long it's taking for some Albertans to receive life-saving care if they call 911. Municipal leaders, urban and rural, are raising the alarm. The Premier talks about dollars, but the most important thing in EMS is minutes. We know that the tinkering from August has not helped anything. Can the Premier tell the House today how many more ambulances are on the road and when EMS wait times will go down? Update that number.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as we underscored yesterday, this summer we saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of EMS calls, for a number of reasons. That is why the government has added several million dollars of additional resources to support hiring additional EMS staff. I'm glad to see that last month there has been an abatement of those calls. I know that the hon. Minister of Health is working very closely with Alberta Health Services to accelerate EMS response times, which is critically important, of course, especially for people waiting for emergency response.

Ms Notley: All they're doing is accelerating the number of minutes people have to wait.

Twenty-three: that's the number of Alberta communities experiencing bed closures, ER closures, and reduced capacity. One thousand and twenty-six: that's the number of Albertans who have died from drug overdoses so far this year. Thirty thousand: that's the number of people with no family doctor in Lethbridge, our fifth-largest city. Mr. Speaker, these are more than numbers; these are Albertans who need care, who need help. Does the Premier have any update with actual numbers for any of those people? It's time that they hear something from this Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the question was. If the question is broadly about resources for health care, they are at the highest level in the history of Alberta. Alberta has the second-highest level of health care spending per capita in Canada. Canada is at the top of the industrialized world in terms of health

spending for a single-payer system. There is an additional \$900 million provided in this year's budget to reduce surgical wait times – that's money that the NDP voted against – \$1.4 billion provided in COVID contingency funding, an additional 500 staff who have been hired in EMS.

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

Provincial Fiscal Update

Ms Phillips: The Finance minister gave Albertans a budget update today, and since his last update, three months ago, he's projecting fewer jobs, a decline in GDP, and more unemployment, all this despite significantly higher oil prices. Now, the government may be rolling in new money, but Albertans are not. The biggest increase in revenue comes from personal income tax, so to the Minister of Finance. Albertans are falling behind. The government is layering on the pain. Will the Finance minister commit to stop raising Albertans' personal income taxes in his next budget?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Yeah. Well, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden Colonel Sanders over there is concerned about the welfare of chickens. The NDP talking about tax increases: the biggest tax increase in Alberta history, the NDP carbon tax. This government has cut taxes on the Alberta economy, which is one of the reasons why we are leading Canada in economic growth; 103,000 net new jobs created since the beginning of this year, the second-fastest job growth in Canada. Incomes are up by 6.2 per cent over the past year. Thank goodness the NDP isn't crushing Alberta's economy with their high taxes anymore. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't cancel anything; he's just sending those carbon taxes to Ottawa.

Now, the minister can't control the cost of beef or tomatoes, but he can control the cost of tuition, school fees, car insurance, and the price people pay for electricity as the temperature drops. Everything this government touches results in higher fees, higher taxes, reduced benefits for people with kids, folks on AISH, or those receiving the seniors' benefit. To the minister. Christmas is coming. Where is this government's specific plan to help people with their tremendous challenges of affordability? Show that you understand what people are facing, Premier.

The Speaker: I encourage the Member for Lethbridge-West to address her questions through the chair.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP cold-heartedly imposed a job-killing carbon tax that raised the cost of groceries, of driving to work, of heating homes, of the basic cost of living, and when we lined up with Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to challenge the federal carbon tax, guess what? The NDP lined up with Justin Trudeau and a higher cost of life. Albertans won't forget that at the next election.

Ms Phillips: That's a superweird flex coming from a guy who endorsed and voted for Erin O'Toole, Mr. Speaker.

Now, today's update on Alberta's economy shows a drop in the number of jobs in Alberta and a smaller economy than was projected just three months ago. The government's own report today attributes much of that decline to the fourth wave. It's right there on page 14. Can the Minister of Finance explain why he's

celebrating when his government's mismanagement has led to such a devastating impact on Albertans: fewer jobs, people leaving, and yet another hike in personal income tax right around the bend in January?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, imagine the NDP talking about fiscal mismanagement. They ran up the largest deficits in Alberta history, but it was never enough. They wanted to borrow more. They wanted to spend more. They wanted to tax more. [interjections]

The Speaker: The Premier has 20 seconds remaining.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, they don't like hearing about their record. This Finance minister, by controlling spending, and this government's pro-jobs, pro-growth policies have led to an historic fiscal turnaround, a \$12.4 billion turnaround, 103,000 net new jobs, leading Canada in economic growth.

Health Care Workers' Vaccination for COVID-19

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, yesterday this government backtracked for the second time on their deadline for all front-line health care workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19. It was indicated that while the vast majority of people working in our hospitals, labs, and clinics have gotten two doses, 3,000 haven't even gotten one. Now the new deadline is on December 13, so to the Premier: what happens after that? Is there a plan in place to backfill those front-line staff if they do not take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their patients, or will the government just simply be giving another delay to the much-needed vaccine mandate for health care workers?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member, as usual, is completely wrong. It is very important that people dealing with patients be vaccinated to reduce the risk of transmission, because patients must come first. [interjection] I'll tell the Leader of the Opposition why. Because if we were to begin removing health care workers in certain rural areas with high levels of undervaccination, we would be unable to provide essential and emergency medical services. Maybe the NDP doesn't care if somebody has a heart attack in Rocky Mountain House and they're 90 minutes to the closest hospital, but this government will always act for the best interest of patients.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, in B.C. 3,000 health care staff were put on unpaid leave after refusing to get the life-saving COVID-19 vaccine, and we haven't seen widespread reports of health care chaos. But here we haven't even seen through our mandate, and already there are constant reports of ER closures, physician shortages, and excruciatingly long waits for EMS, all these shortages fuelled by this government's petty fights with doctors, attacks on the wages of nurses, and mishandling of the pandemic. Premier, is the reason that your government won't enforce a vaccine mandate for front-line workers because you've already damaged our health care system so badly?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the Premier, we worked with AHS to resolve this issue in a pragmatic way, putting the Alberta patient first. We fully support the AHS vaccination policy as that is the safest way to protect the Alberta patient, but in certain locations where implementing the policy at this point in time would result in closures of services, we need to make sure that we have those services available for Alberta patients. That's what this policy does. We will review this policy at the end of March next year.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, this government didn't support AHS on their mandate; they told them to delay it. The president and CEO of AHS made it clear yesterday that she was ready to follow through on the deadline, which is today, but was given political direction to extend it by two weeks. Now we have front-line health care staff working in hospitals and labs who aren't properly protected from COVID, aren't properly protecting their patients from COVID, and it's made all the more concerning with the emergence of the new omicron variant. Bluntly, we need more health care staff who are properly vaccinated on our front lines. Will this government finally consider incentives to draw new health care workers to Alberta? Will they backfill the positions that they have made . . .

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, we continue to support AHS's policy, including exemptions for those with valid religious or medical exemptions. AHS has done great work in getting their staff vaccinated. As of yesterday 96.3 per cent of staff are vaccinated, including 99.5 per cent of physicians. The issue was managing a handful of small work sites where the choices of a few individual staff members could impact service. We put service of the Alberta patient as paramount. That is the focus of us supporting this policy, and that's what we are doing.

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

Investment in Alberta

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government and this caucus were elected under a platform that would create jobs and restore our economy. To that end, our government created a body known as Invest Alberta to attract investment to this province after the NDP spent their first and their last four-year term driving it out. Under the NDP's tenure investment within our province fell by a third, or \$40 billion. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation tell this House whether Invest Alberta has had any success?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the NDP don't like to hear these good-news stories, but they keep coming to Alberta: Amazon Web Services, with its \$4 billion plus investment, working with Invest Alberta; RBC's innovation hub, 300 jobs for the city of Calgary; Mphasis and Infosys, over 1,500 jobs combined coming to Alberta, diversifying our province. The NDP don't want to hear about their economic legacy, chasing away tens of billions of dollars in investment. This government is focused on bringing in investment, diversifying our economy, and creating jobs for Albertans.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the answer. In addition to having a significant role in huge investments within our province from operations such as Amazon Web Services and Northern Petrochemical, Invest Alberta has also been involved in a number of other successful announcements as well. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation tell the House what the investment and growth fund is and what it has done to attract investment to Alberta?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was an exciting day because we learned that the investment in growth fund is working for Albertans: \$850 million of capital projects right here for Albertans, creating close to 2,000 jobs for Albertans, including just yesterday the GoodLeaf announcement, a cutting-edge vertical farm.

It's going to disrupt imports of farming from California and Mexico, creating jobs, further resiliency for the supply lines, and agricultural jobs for Albertans.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you once again to the minister for the answer. That is wonderful news and a welcome addition to our province. These investments are creating jobs in our province and diversifying our economy. Now that you mention it, Minister, agriculture is one of the most advanced industries and one that employs hundreds of thousands of Albertans. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation tell this House how many jobs these investments will create and also expand?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I want to give a little bit of a legacy tour. It's one of those things. I'm a little sentimental every now and again about the NDP legacy tour bus. Let's talk about the tens of billions of dollars that they chased away from our province. And I've got to mention this one more time. The *Financial Post* stated that Alberta has got its swagger back. That's because Alberta's government is focused on bringing investment into Alberta, not chasing it away like the NDP.

Workplace Conduct of Ministers and Staff

Member Irwin: In a lawsuit filed in court, former UCP staffer Ariella Kimmel alleges that the Minister of Health's senior adviser, Ivan Bernardo, sexually harassed female staff at the Legislature. When the Premier was asked about this in the House, he said that Mr. Bernardo ceased to work for the government last year. Media reports suggest that Mr. Bernardo's contract simply expired after he left government. He found a lucrative job providing legal advice to AHS. Can the Minister of Health please clarify: did Mr. Bernardo resign, was he dismissed, or did his contract simply expire?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as indicated in this House earlier when this issue was raised, Mr. Bernardo was doing work for AHS and the AHS Board. You know, I was informed that he was no longer doing work at this point in time, recognizing that at that point in time he was doing work for Miller Thomson, which is an outside law firm providing advice to AH and AHS, and he's no longer doing work for AH and AHS at this point in time.

Member Irwin: Given that in the routine disclosure of government expenses released last week, Alberta Health reports that they made a payment of \$28,000 to Mr. Bernardo this year, a different fiscal year than when the Premier says he left government, and given that this massive payment would have been made to Mr. Bernardo after allegations surfaced that he sexually harassed a government colleague, can the Minister of Health tell Albertans whether this payment was related to Mr. Bernardo's departure from government, or was he paid for additional work after he left the minister's office? Is it really appropriate . . .

The Speaker: The . . .

Member Irwin: . . . to continue to make large sums of public money despite serious allegations of sexual harassment being levelled against him?

The Speaker: My apologies to the member for the interruption. My error.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I indicated, the individual in question is no longer working for the AHS Board or for AHS. Any arrangements between the AHS Board and AHS and the individual and his law firm are between the individual and AH and AHS, and I can't comment on any payments made in that regard.

Member Irwin: Given that Ms Kimmel claims that she was fired after coming forward with allegations of harassment against Mr. Bernardo and the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and that it now appears that Mr. Bernardo continued to make money in the public service and given that Ms Kimmel's allegations have led to the resignation of a cabinet minister and an independent investigation into the workplace culture of this Legislature, can the Associate Minister of Status of Women tell this House: what message does it send to women working in this building when a woman is fired for bringing forward allegations of sexual assault but the male staffer accused gets a \$28,000 payday?

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member across knows full well that I cannot comment on a case before the courts. I will however say this, that the Premier's office has initiated an independent review of the human resources policies for political staff. Jamie Pytel has been appointed to that – she currently serves as Edmonton's Integrity Commissioner – and I trust that she will do a full investigation and report back to us.

Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Schmidt: Yesterday I was appalled to watch the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright stand in this House and deny the science of climate change again and claim that there is no evidence of extreme weather events as a result of climate change. He cited a nearly decade-old report as his proof, and he did all of this as B.C. is dealing with massive fires that have destroyed forests and massive rainfall that has triggered record floods and landslides. We need to do more to combat climate change and prepare communities for climate adaptation. To the minister of environment: is now really the time to have a member of the government caucus espousing his climate change denying nonsense in this House?

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is doing a lot right now when it comes to the management of GHG emissions. In fact, just seven projects that I announced this month alone are reducing 2.9 million tonnes of emissions by 2030 at the same time as supporting 2,200 jobs in our province. That's just seven projects. That's a sharp contrast from that hon. member and their former NDP government, who focused on taxing hockey moms and dads and attacking our largest industry, whose party continues to block legal pipelines being built in our neighbouring provinces. We're focused on real action and standing up for oil and gas.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that while UCP MLAs are cherry-picking decades-old data to justify their climate change denial, a new report from the University of Alberta released literally yesterday shows that eight of the world's worst fire seasons have occurred in the past decade and given that those fires have eroded areas in B.C. that once would have provided flood protection for places like Merritt and Abbotsford – these places didn't flood before; they do now, and our climate change is the culprit – and given that Alberta needs its own climate adaptation strategy, not junk science from the UCP

backbenches, will the minister convene an expert panel of scientists to develop a climate adaptation strategy for Alberta?

Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, let me give you a couple more projects that were announced this month alone: 60 new shovel-ready projects, creating 5,600 jobs, injecting \$2 billion into Alberta's economy, and reducing 6.8 million tonnes of emissions by 2030. That's real action led by this government in partnership with our largest industry inside this province; again, a sharp contrast from that hon. member, who spends his time with his party trying to shut down the oil and gas industry inside this province. We were the first province to take action on GHG emissions inside this country, but we're doing it in partnership with the oil and gas industry.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:18.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that in the past few years Alberta has been hit with severe weather events in the form of huge wildfires, devastating floods, and hailstorms and given that ignoring this evidence, as it's clear the UCP is eager to do, will only endanger lives, communities, and our economy and given that we deserve better than a government that plays footsie with climate change deniers and downplays the risk of climate change, if this minister won't bring on scientists to develop a plan and if he won't condemn members of his caucus for espousing harmful conspiracies in this House, who in the government will act before it's too late?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this province and this province's industries will not be lectured by that member, who is part of a party that passed a motion just a few weeks ago by 85 per cent to block a legal pipeline in the province of B.C., who has not condemned David Suzuki's comments on blowing up pipelines, nothing from that member. Time and time again that member and his party have focused on trying to stop the largest industry in this province, directly attacking the men and women who work in the oil and gas industry. We're taking real action on climate change, but we're going to continue to do it with a path forward for oil and gas in the province of Alberta.

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

Adoption

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November is Adoption Awareness Month, and it is no secret that adoption is near and dear to my heart. As many of you know, adopting a child is an extensive and complicated process that often takes years to complete and a tremendous amount of mental and emotional energy, but I know that Alberta's government has worked hard to make this process better for parents. To the Minister of Children's Services: can you please update this House on what is happening with the adoption process here in Alberta?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to thank the member for his passion and advocacy and make sure that the member knows the impact that he has had on adoption policy here in our province.

Amendments have been made to the postadoption information registry to help make it easier to access adoption information. Nearly one hundred family connections have been made since those changes took place. We also supported increased accountability and transparency for parents by requiring licensed adoption agencies to

notify applicants about conditional licences and the fees that prospective adoptive parents would pay. I'm proud of the changes that we've made. They truly have a lasting impact on families here in Alberta.

2:20

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

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that the adoption process is onerous and emotionally draining for Albertan parents and given that the process could be a disincentive for prospective parents who want to bring a child into a loving home and given that I had a motion pass in the Legislature in May 2019, asking the government to streamline the adoption process, to the same minister: what progress has been made, since my motion, to make the adoption process easier for parents across Alberta?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There has been a positive response, as I've said, to the postadoption legislative changes, particularly from birth siblings of adoptees, extended birth family members, and the Métis Nation of Alberta. By modernizing this process, which was part of our red tape work, we also proclaimed Bill 206, which was supported unanimously by members of this House in the last Legislature but was left to collect dust on the desks of the NDP members of this House. It has made it possible for adoptive families to post profiles online. That work is under way. We've also streamlined the adoption home inspector process and written the federal government about red tape in . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that adoption is a very sensitive and personal decision for parents to make and given that it is a complicated and ever-changing process and given that there will always be ways to improve the process so more families can be reconnected, can the Minister of Children's Services let this House know how these current changes have actually made differences in the lives of adoptees and their families?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, one of the experiences that was shared with us, given it is Adoption Awareness Month, is something that I want to share in this House today. In 2012 two siblings born in 1985 and 1979 were reunited after being adopted by different families. At that time they learned that they had two additional siblings who were also adopted, each by different families as well. Since these changes were made, these were two of the first applicants to register when this new legislation took place. They have now received their siblings' information, and I am told that this legislation is really, truly helping to connect families and make the lives of adoptees easier in Alberta.

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

Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Indigenous Relations about the turmoil surrounding the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. The CEO has departed without reason, as have four of seven board members. The minister shrugged and laughed off my question, but this is a serious matter. This is a mass resignation, and the government didn't even

feel the need to put out a press release. Will the minister stop smiling, cut the spin, and tell this House exactly why he lost the AIOC CEO and four board members? Is there a common reason, or is there something seriously wrong with this corporation? Please be transparent.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member could use a little math lesson. We had our board chair retire to move on to look after his own businesses, and I'm very happy for his outstanding work. Like I said yesterday, I asked him to give me two years. He wanted to give me a year, but he stayed for the two, so I thank him so much for all that he did there. That's the only board member. We got another board member to join us, a lovely lady from up north, Chana Martineau, an Indigenous lady, so now most of the board is Indigenous people. I'm not quite sure of the math over there.

Mr. Feehan: Given that this minister talked about the great work that the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation is doing but given that he has only announced funding of two projects in two and a half years and given that in my recent trip to Fort McMurray I heard from Indigenous leaders that they wanted the corporation to start investing in business feasibility studies to strengthen local businesses and given that now, with no CEO and the board largely replaced, concerns and sound strategies like these are going to go unheard and unacted upon, is this really how this government minister claims to be moving at the speed of business?

Mr. Wilson: I know they can't stand the good news, Mr. Speaker, but just last month we did do another announcement up north: five Métis communities, three First Nations involved in a wonderful project that's going to bring their communities into prosperity. Some of these communities were experiencing abject poverty, and now they're going to be able to provide housing and services for their community, so it's a good-news story. I know they're going to have to polish up those records. Don't go breaking my heart, but I'm going to have to do it time and time again.

Mr. Feehan: Given that yesterday I asked a serious question about a corporation board member being named in a \$25 million lawsuit alleging racism and sexual harassment at Indian Oil and Gas Canada and given that one of the claims in that lawsuit was that the plaintiff was denied a promotion because she rejected sexual advances of the CEO and given that the AIOC board member named in the lawsuit still sits on the board, can the minister inform this House if he's concerned about these allegations against this board member and whether he has launched any internal investigation to determine if these serious allegations are occluded in the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do take these things seriously. I have three daughters of my own and three granddaughters, so this is a very serious subject to me. We made sure that the AIOC has a code of conduct, and the alleged incident did not even occur at the AIOC. It's up to the board chair to determine if anyone is noncompliant with that code of conduct.

AISH and Income Support Payments and Benefits

Ms Renaud: The NDP indexed income supports, including AISH, to the cost of living so that when inflation increases, like it is now,

income supports and AISH would also increase. The UCP said that they supported this but quickly reversed it as soon as they could, and now Alberta is experiencing a severe increase in grinding poverty. AISH recipients stand to lose approximately \$1,300 per year because of this policy change. Does the Minister of Community and Social Services acknowledge that this government has contributed to deepening poverty of low-income and disabled Albertans?

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government continues to help Albertans who have permanent disabilities to meet their daily needs. With a \$1.3 billion AISH budget, this is the highest in our provincial history. With the monthly AISH benefit of \$1,685, it's the highest in the country. Mr. Speaker, our record speaks on its own.

Ms Renaud: Given that we know the UCP changed the dates people receive AISH last year to cook their books and make their budget deficit look smaller and given the UCP continually find new ways to chip away at income supports like cutting housing supplements and given the UCP told Albertans during the campaign that they would keep benefits indexed to inflation, which was clearly an empty promise, and given that inflation is now wreaking havoc on household budgets, will the Minister of Community and Social Services commit to going back to the cabinet table and reversing this devastating cut? It won't be too onerous, I promise.

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, Albertans eligible for AISH will continue to receive the benefits that we established here. We'll continue to find ways to streamline the process, making it easier for Albertans to access that. We'll work every way possible to sustain the AISH benefit that we currently provide, which is the highest in the country. We stand strongly on our record of protecting some of the most vulnerable Albertans.

Ms Renaud: Given that December is an expensive month for all Albertans, including people on income support, and given that the payment for January is usually delivered before Christmas so that people have money to spend on holidays, but the UCP changed the dates so now it comes after Christmas, Mr. Speaker, and given that Alberta Supports offices are closed during the holidays, we would like to know: what will be the date? Will people have money for Christmas? And given this government's penchant for spinning garbage, I would like them to answer the question: why did you cut income support and AISH benefits?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Luan: Mr. Speaker, it looks like the opposition just couldn't handle good news from this side of the government. We changed the payment date to earlier, before Christmas, so that people who are waiting for this critical benefit will receive it before the Christmas holiday. I don't understand where their heart is. They are not even joining us to celebrate this good decision. It's disappointing to hear from the opposition. They don't know what to fight for; they pick up issues like this. They're supposed to help people with AISH benefits, not the other way around.

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

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been a world leader in responsible development through partnerships between private-sector investment and good government policy. Alberta

continues to develop world-class resources while lowering emissions and environmental footprint. Alberta was the first jurisdiction in North America to establish a levy on industrial emissions more than a decade ago, the first original government in North America to set a methane emission reduction target. Can the minister of environment share ways in which the government is continuing to lower emissions?

2:30

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

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. We are focused in Alberta on policies that are tailored to Alberta's unique economy, that are getting tangible and real results. We were the first jurisdiction in North America to bring forward an industrial carbon price, in 2007. Just recently we focused on cutting 1.5 million tonnes of methane right inside this province. Again, real, tangible, measurable results, a sharp contrast to the NDP, who have focused on taxing hockey moms and hockey dads and getting no results, who could not even bring forward a number of GHG emissions that they thought they reduced with their ridiculous climate plan. Alberta is on track when it comes to environmental policy.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that the Alberta government is committed to creating jobs and reducing emissions and that the government recently announced an investment of \$131 million from the TIER fund into industrial energy efficiency and the carbon capture, utilization, and storage program, can the minister share with the House the level of emissions this investment will reduce and the jobs it will create?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, those projects will reduce 2.9 million tonnes of emissions by 2030 at the same time as creating 2,200 jobs. Another announcement that was made last month was that \$176 million from the TIER fund went to 16 projects, created 5,600 jobs, injected \$2 billion into our economy, and is well on track to reduce 6.8 million tonnes of GHG emissions inside Alberta's economy, again working hand in hand with our industry. We're proud of our industry. Unlike the NDP, who are trying to block oil and gas, we're finding a way forward for our greatest industry in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta's hydrogen plan, the petrochemical incentive program, and the natural gas strategy are attracting massive new investments to the province and that this development means more private-sector investment into clean technology and that a combined total of nearly \$50 million was provided to 23 Alberta projects to advance innovation, that will help Alberta become an even stronger leader in clean energy technologies, can the minister share the benefits of new technologies on Alberta's environment?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll use as an example 23 projects that we're working on with Alberta Innovates that are creating 1,307 jobs for \$50 million worth of investment in emission reduction technology at the same time as injecting \$169 million into the province's GDP, again, tangible results. Working with the industry that the NDP don't want to work with and getting real results: it's a sharp contrast from the NDP, who focus their time on allying with Justin Trudeau and trying to attack oil and gas. We're

going to continue to focus on tangible results while the NDP focuses on blocking pipelines.

The Speaker: I just want to clarify with the Government House Leader. Was there a point of order raised at 2:29?

Mr. Jason Nixon: No.

Support for Vulnerable Youth

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Speaker, on July 8 the Member for Calgary-West was sworn in as the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. The deaths of young people in care and aging out of care have risen sharply over the past few months. The Premier has said that this is because of the opioid crisis. In June of this year the Child and Youth Advocate recommended that the UCP develop a youth opioid and substance use strategy, and the ministry accepted that recommendation. Has the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions prioritized this strategy? The government has known for months the impact this is having on Alberta's youth.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before in this House, you know, the death of anyone as a result of opioids is unfortunate, and we don't want that to occur, but it was this government that eliminated user fees. I can tell you that under the previous government, unless you had a Mastercard, a Visa, or an American Express card – that was the only way that you were going to get help. We have made it so that everybody in this province has access to detox treatment and a form of recovery, and that is something that we're proud of. We are going to continue to help people on a pathway to recovery, everyone in this province.

Ms Pancholi: I'm not sure the member heard the question.

Given that the Child and Youth Advocate has opposed the decision of the UCP to lower the age of eligibility for supports for young people aging out of care and given that the advocate stated that preventing drug-poisoning deaths requires helping young people develop the skills and supports to avoid turning to substances when faced with adversity and given that since he joined cabinet, the associate minister has not spoken in this Assembly about the impacts of the opioid crisis on youth but only engages in overheated rhetoric attacking previous policies, to the same associate minister: what has he done in the last three months specifically to address the ongoing youth opioid crisis?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, first of all, the changes being made to the supports and financial assistance program were really because we have to do a better job of transitioning young people, whether that's young people in care transitioning between placements or young adults that are transitioning out of care and into adulthood.

I have had a number of conversations with my colleague the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I can tell you that there are going to be treatment beds – already many have been announced, Mr. Speaker, as part of the 4,000 treatment beds across the province – that are going to be targeted for children and youth. We have the youth hubs right across this province as well as a \$53 million investment in mental health and . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Given that under the 29th Legislature the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions was a vocal advocate for improving child intervention in this province and given that in the 30th Legislature he has not spoken out once as his cabinet colleagues cut young people aging out of care off critical supports in the middle of a pandemic and a mental health and opioid crisis, I have a straightforward question for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Does he support the decision of the Minister of Children's Services to lower the age of eligibility and cut off supports to young people aging out of care? To the Associate Minister.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would really love to talk about Serenity and Serenity's law. While the members opposite – I think that member needs to talk to her colleagues, because when that young girl's family was in this Chamber, it was those members who said . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Hon. members, we will have order, including the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I can appreciate this is a sensitive topic for everyone. We can be disagreeable without being mean to each other. [interjections] You get the point.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, when that young family, that Indigenous family, was in this Chamber, in the gallery, it was the members opposite that said no to Serenity's law. It was these members in this Chamber on this side that passed a bill to make sure every adult in this province will take responsibility for children. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Educational Curriculum Redesign

Ms Hoffman: Albertans have already lost patience with this government's attempt to push their ideology on Alberta's education system. Last month the government posted three jobs: assistant deputy minister of curriculum division, executive director of learning and teaching resources, and executive director for high school curriculum. None of these jobs posted required a teaching certificate, a bachelor of education, or any expertise in curriculum studies. Why isn't the minister hiring teachers to write the curriculum? Does she really think she knows more than they do?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, that's an absolutely ridiculous statement. We've had teachers involved in the education curriculum draft right from the beginning. We have people on the curriculum working group. We have retired teachers. I have seconded teachers. My department is full of teachers. My department is over 500 people. That's a ridiculous statement.

Ms Hoffman: They were ridiculous job postings from this minister.

Given that these jobs became vacant during the drafting of curriculum, when the government is field testing a curriculum right now without resources to support it in English or French, and given that the government claims that developing these resources was a priority for them, my question to the minister is: if the position of executive director of learning and teaching resources was vacant, who exactly was developing these resources? Did the minister give another sole-source contract to another one of the UCP's racist friends, like they did last time?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I have, as I've just said, over 500 people working in my department. I have over 150 people working in the curriculum department as well, all of them working on refining the draft of the K to 6 curriculum, on which we are

listening to all Albertans, the most transparent process ever, unlike the members opposite when they brought forward their draft.

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Given that the current curriculum draft lacks credibility on a variety of fronts and given that the minister is ignoring the voices of Indigenous, Black, Japanese, and others communities who feel that the curriculum is an attack on their heritage and their history and given that rather than addressing these, both the Premier and the minister have ignored them and brushed them aside, will the minister admit that her racist curriculum has been a terrible failure and invite Indigenous, Black, and Japanese educators and leaders to the table as partners to actually write the curriculum? Why does Chris Champion get a say and racialized Albertans don't?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite is making up stories. That is absolutely not true. We have got more than a million dollars in grants out to all our education partners, including the Indigenous community, many of which have been very, very involved. I look forward to getting their feedback. The only thing and the only ones who have failed are the members opposite, who failed to deliver a curriculum to this province. We will not fail. We promised Albertans, and we will get the job done.

The Speaker: Happy to proceed to the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in just a moment. Over the past number of days in the Assembly there's been a significant amount of pointing at each other, and I'm not sure that it adds to the level of decorum. If you are so inclined and you'd like to point at someone, I'm here to offer my services to you. I'm just not convinced that pointing at each other is going to be helping, but I am here at your service.

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

Health Care Workers' Vaccination for COVID-19 (continued)

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked a question a while back about the value taxpayer dollars are receiving from AHS management and the failure of AHS to plan on diminishing ICU capacity. That comment received attention across the country, including a plethora of health care professionals that have been reaching out to me asking for help when it comes to receiving exemptions and their choice not to receive the vaccine. To the Minister of Health: are there health care professionals that need an exemption but are being denied? Is there a place where their appeals can be heard?

Mr. Copping: Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, medical exemptions are provided by an AHS employee's own clinician, who is, in turn, regulated by the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. The CPSA sets the standard for what qualifies as a medical exemption based on clinical evidence. If an AHS employee requires a medical exemption and has a valid medical reason, then that's a discussion between them and their physician. As with any self-regulated group, if clinicians decide that appeals are required, then that's the decision to create an appellate body. The people to talk to are the CPSA.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the mandatory vaccine policy was introduced by AHS and that other provinces such as Quebec and Ontario rescinded their policy as it further put strain on their health workers and that these Alberta health care workers have been safely working for two years now

without a vaccine, will the minister intervene to rescind the AHS policy and mitigate another vital resource constraint?

Mr. Copping: Thanks again to the hon. member for the question, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services brought in their vaccine mandate in order to ensure that health care workers can provide care to patients safely. Vaccines are the single most effective tool in our tool kit when it comes to dealing with COVID-19, and I want to thank every health care worker who has gone out and gotten vaccinated. Yesterday our government directed AHS to accept proof of a negative COVID-19 test from employees in areas where immunization policy would have led to an impact on services. We are confident that this will ensure that services will remain available, particularly in rural areas. Again, our focus is on the Alberta patient.

The Speaker: The minister – correction: the hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Unless the Speaker knows of something that I don't.

Given that a number of health care professionals could have valid medical reasons for not wanting to take the COVID vaccine and given that they are our most informed group when it comes to health care, the benefits and the detriments of vaccinations, and given that there are real pressures on doctors from the college of physicians, AHS to either take the vaccine or lose their jobs, can the minister set up an appeal board that could hear these cases independently?

Mr. Copping: Thanks again to the hon. member for the question. As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, the CPSA, the college, is responsible for enforcing clinical standards for doctors in Alberta, including medical exemptions for COVID-19 vaccines. I understand that the CPSA provided doctors with guidelines in providing these medical exemptions and that there's some flexibility in those guidelines as well. We shouldn't ask politicians to hear clinical appeals. If an AHS employee has a valid medical reason why they can't be vaccinated, I would encourage them to meet with their doctor so they can confirm that reason with AHS and for any further concerns to reach out to the CPSA.

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

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika has a statement to make.

Magrath High School Volleyball Champions

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was an exciting weekend for the town of Magrath as they welcomed home their varsity high school volleyball teams from provincials, both the boys and the girls, who got the W, brought home the hardware, and brought home the championship banners.

The varsity girls team competed in Taber for the 2A provincial championship and played an energetic final match against Calgary Christian, winning in three sets. I want to publicly congratulate the whole team and highlight the seniors who played their last game of high school volleyball. This includes Lilly Clifton, Kenzie Kutsch, Abi Payne, and Hattie Ogden. I also want to thank and congratulate the coaches of this team, Tara Anderson and Tabatha Ogden.

For the boys team, competing in Westlock, Alberta, for the 3A provincial title, a fantastic game was won against l'École McTavish.

The six seniors on this team include Daylen Wilde, Benson Baril, Jacob Simpson, Nathan Ball, Mark Atwood, and Wyatt Currie. Coaches Shane Orr and Ken Baker worked hard all season with these boys, and each member of this team, including the coaches, earned this win.

Mr. Speaker, high school sports in southern Alberta are more than just a game. It's a part of our culture. Sports are a lifestyle for these athletes. Small-town Alberta kids have been coached from young ages to work hard in every game you play and never quit no matter what the opponent swings at you. When big Calgary and Edmonton teams come down south, they leave in shock after our small-town teams put on a clinic. I was honoured to play basketball, volleyball, and baseball at Magrath high school. I will forever remember the impact of various coaches and mentors on me, including Ron Strate and the legendary – one of Canada's finest – Phil Tollestrup. For many of these kids, this is what drives them to be successful later in life as they set goals and work hard to accomplish them.

Congratulations to both these teams on their hard-fought wins. Your town and your families are proud of all you've accomplished. Now it's time to celebrate.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Bill 87

Electoral Divisions (Calgary-Bhullar-McCall) Amendment Act, 2021

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 87, Electoral Divisions (Calgary-Bhullar-McCall) Amendment Act, 2021, to honour the legacy of the 768th member of this Assembly, the late Manmeet Bhullar, in particular his contribution to this province, to his community, to his constituents, and to this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 87 read a first time]

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act the government of Alberta 2021-22 mid-year fiscal update and economic statement.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the point of order at 2:18 has been withdrawn.

As such, Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

2:50

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 84

Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2021

[Debate adjourned November 23: Mr. Deol speaking]

The Chair: I see the hon. minister rising to speak.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I've followed the debate on Bill 84, Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2021, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-South East for providing some great answers so far. I'd like to take the opportunity to address some additional questions that have been raised by members of this Assembly.

First of all, before I do that, I'd like to provide some clarifying comments on corporate opportunity waivers. As they are new, it is important that all members can have a good understanding of what they are, how they work, who they're for, and why this is good news for Alberta, Madam Chair. Ultimately, on the corporate opportunity waivers, the simplest explanation I can offer is that they are a tool that will help Alberta businesses to attract more investment, especially investment from outside of Alberta, that otherwise would not have been available to them, that otherwise would not have considered being put to work in an Alberta corporation. The way this works right now is that we need to look at the context of private equity funds or venture capital funds, because these are some of the scenarios where this is most applicable.

If you think about a private equity fund, typically, you know, they're managing a large pool of money, and they're looking to put that to work in a number of different projects and companies and then to help see it grow. Often these firms, these funds will have some industry experience and expertise on specific industries, specific sectors, so it would stand to reason that they're going to want to invest in multiple projects, in multiple companies that are in those same industries and in those same sectors.

The challenge that they've run into is with the corporate opportunity doctrine and the status quo of what we would have in Alberta today, that if they make an investment into one of these initial companies and then they follow their standard practice, which is to appoint someone onto the board of that company to oversee their interests in that company and to oversee the significant investment that they've made in that company, if an opportunity were to come up down the road for them to invest in another organization that is in the same industry, they would be prohibited from being able to make that investment unless they were first to go through a long process and go and talk to the board of the initial company they've invested in and say: "Hey, we have this other opportunity. We want to invest here." You know, the fact of the matter is that that process can often take so much time that the opportunity that originally presented itself would no longer be on the table for these investors.

What we've seen in some other jurisdictions, Madam Chair, is that these funds would often make it a condition of their investment to say: "Look, I really want to invest in you. I really want to help you grow. I really want to help lend my expertise to help you reach your fullest potential as a business, and I want to put my capital to work in your business, but I need to know that I will be free to invest in other projects that might come my way that are in a similar industry." There are a few jurisdictions in the States that have corporate opportunity waivers set up so that if a corporation that was raising capital wants to issue a waiver like this, they can, and that will give some very clear direction and some clear parameters under which the private equity fund, in this example, would be able to make an investment without first having to go and run it by the company that they had originally invested in.

Ultimately, this is a tool to give to corporations who are looking to raise capital and who are looking to be more attractive and more appealing to private equity and venture capital funds to say: hey, we have a tool that will permit us to give you a waiver, so if you want to put some capital to work in us, we're not going to stand in

the way of you also investing in other projects in similar industries. We've seen that work in a few jurisdictions in the States, and we want to be the first in Canada to allow that tool to be used for corporations that are incorporated in Alberta.

That gives you a little bit of background on how this would work and what the intent is behind bringing this forward. Now, Madam Chair, of course, we want to make sure that we do this thoughtfully and carefully, and that is why we are going to make sure that these corporate opportunity waivers can only be used if they are embedded into either a unanimous shareholders agreement or the articles of incorporation of the corporation that's looking to issue the waiver.

The reason why that's important, Madam Chair, is because if you are an existing corporation who wants to start making use of this tool, you would need to have a conversation with all of your existing shareholders first. If you want to either amend your unanimous shareholders agreement to allow this or amend your articles of incorporation to allow this, you would need all of your shareholders onboard. We believe that that's really important. It's important to make sure that the shareholders have a chance to say: "Okay. Let's have a gut check here. Why might we want to issue a waiver? In what very specific circumstances and for what purpose? Is it going to be in our best interests as a corporation to do this?"

You know, if the answer to that question is no, then those shareholders don't have to approve it, and it's not going to go forward. That's how we make sure that there are the appropriate checks and balances with the way that this would be structured so that this is ultimately a tool that would be used to benefit the issuing company while also ensuring that the investor has the freedom to continue investing in other projects. The intent is for this to be a win-win. We know that it can be done with some thoughtful implementation and ensuring that the details would be embedded in the unanimous shareholders agreements or in the articles of incorporation.

I think that's a good segue, Madam Chair, to maybe begin answering some of the questions that were raised by the Member for Edmonton-Manning, who asked several questions about how the changes we're making to allow corporate opportunity waivers might impact other jurisdictions, other pieces of legislation, including the Securities Act.

Let me be clear that some of the people and groups that we consulted with included the government of Canada and all of our provincial and territorial counterparts; officials across multiple government of Alberta departments, including Treasury Board and Finance as well as Jobs, Economy and Innovation; and also officials from the Alberta Securities Commission. None of these engagement participants indicated that the changes we are proposing will conflict with corporate or securities legislation in their jurisdictions.

I just want to repeat that here for all members' benefit: there is no conflict between our including corporate opportunity waivers in our Business Corporations Act and Canadian securities law. Corporate opportunity waivers do not require changes to Alberta's securities legislation, nor would they affect the ability of Alberta companies to do business in other jurisdictions. Alberta corporations choosing to extraprovincially register do so to carry on business in that jurisdiction. Madam Chair, the rules around corporations that register in more than one province indicate that the corporation has to operate according to the extraprovincial rules set out in the home jurisdiction's legislation. There are specific extraprovincial rules that the Alberta corporation must follow when operating their business in that jurisdiction, but the head office of the corporation still follows the rules in Alberta.

Before continuing to talk about the Securities Act, I'll just take a minute to reiterate that these changes will make Alberta a leader in

Canada, and as I said at the outset, we believe that this tool, the corporate opportunity waiver tool, will help to attract further investment and attract businesses that are looking to incorporate and will say: "Hey, you know what? Alberta is the best place in Canada to do this." That, Madam Chair, is a huge win for Alberta.

Continuing on to the Securities Act, I'll just clarify for the folks who may be watching at home. Alberta securities legislation governs the conduct of businesses that raise capital and provides for investor protection. There are rules that require issuers to disclose their corporate governance practices, including an issuer's practices and policies as they relate to conflicts of interest as well as corporate governance guidelines to assist issuers with these matters.

While securities laws in all Canadian jurisdictions do not contain prescriptive requirements with respect to corporate opportunities given that this is largely a matter of corporate law, securities laws do contain complementary requirements for clear disclosure designed to provide investors with knowledge of an issuer's position on matters such as these. By expressly allowing corporate opportunity waivers, the law would promote clarity for issuers, encourage transparency respecting the use of such practices, and provide a legal framework for transactions that raise corporate opportunity issues.

Similarly, Madam Chair, in addition to the officials from Treasury Board and Finance and the Alberta Securities Commission, we consulted with additional experts, including accountants and accounting associations, corporate lawyers in private practice who are familiar with the financial rules under other Alberta statutes, and none of them indicated that corporate opportunity waivers would affect financial rules in other Alberta legislation. These were good questions from the Member for Edmonton-Manning, Madam Chair, and I want to thank the member opposite for raising them. I hope that what I've been able to share today is helpful in providing some clarity.

3:00

There's much more to say on corporate opportunity waivers, Madam Chair, and I'd like to address questions from several members about the fiduciary duties of directors in light of our introduction of corporate opportunity waivers. First of all, let me be clear that the act will require that the implementation of corporate opportunity waivers – the details on how they would be used would have to be embedded in the corporation's unanimous shareholders agreement or in their articles of incorporation. As I shared at the outset, you know, there are very good reasons for why that would be needed, and that is to ensure that this can't be abused, that this needs to be used in a way that it's going to be a win-win. It is going to be beneficial to the issuing corporation and, obviously, beneficial to the recipient.

Should this legislation pass, when we work on the accompanying business corporation regulation, we will work on detailing the appropriate requirements; for example, types, classes, and categories of opportunities that can or cannot be renounced or waived, documents and procedures for renouncing or waiving, and disclosures required, to name a few items that I think are of the most interest to you, Madam Chair, and to members of this Assembly. In the same way that extensive research and consultation informed the amendments before us today, we will continue to do our research and our due diligence, and we will continue to consult with experts to develop the supporting regulations.

I know that my colleague the Member for Calgary-South East clarified a time or two during second reading that corporations are not being mandated to use such waivers. We are simply giving them the option to use this tool, and that is what the amendments before us today are all about. I think that's just important to note. Nobody

is going to be forced to use this tool. It might not be necessary for everybody, but we know that there are certain instances where this is a tool that could help Alberta corporations to attract more investment and especially, Madam Chair, more investment from outside of the province.

That's what this government is all about, Madam Chair, looking for every opportunity to attract more investment, to create more jobs, to grow and diversify our economy. Well, this is something that is in my area of responsibility as Minister of Service Alberta, the minister responsible for the Business Corporations Act. It's something that I can actually change that will have a meaningful difference on making Alberta's economy that much stronger.

Madam Chair, I know another thing that's worth pointing out is that if a director chooses to pursue an opportunity that is covered by a waiver – again, these waivers must be included in the articles of incorporation or a unanimous shareholders agreement – if that director chooses to take advantage of following through on using that waiver, then the result is that they are not violating their duty of care to the corporation. That's why these are so important. This provides clarity. It provides certainty, and it makes sure that everyone is playing by the same rules, singing from the same song sheet if you will.

Waivers are very specific. Because those waivers will be about very specific use cases, it's important to also comment that directors are not being absolved of their fiduciary duties. You know, they obviously have the broader fiduciary duty, and they need to follow through with that, Madam Chair. Anything that would be outside of the waiver's scope: it's still status quo. Those directors have the same obligations, the same requirements to abide by conflict of interest rules and codes of conduct, so I just want to make it very clear that this does not undo all of those important safeguards and checks and balances that are embedded in our system.

I may be a little biased, Madam Chair, but I think that, you know, an article from the *Financial Post* did an excellent job recently of sharing what it is that we're doing, why we're doing it, and also some feedback from three independent sources. I know that this article has been helpful to members in this Chamber, and I just want to thank the members for reading it and for sharing it. I believe it's been referenced a few times in some previous discussions in this Chamber.

Maybe moving on to some other themes of questions that have been raised related to corporate opportunity waivers – and that is about the question around legal challenges in other jurisdictions – I know that, you know, the specific legal challenge that was cited in some earlier discussion in this Chamber, Madam Chair, is also the first item that would come up on a Google search related to corporate opportunity waivers and legal challenges, and that means that over the years many people have been looking into this question.

I want to provide some clarity for the benefit of all members because it is an important question and we should be thinking about these things. You know, we're not the first to implement this. We will be the first in Canada, but we're not the first to do this. So we can learn from the experience of other jurisdictions that have used these tools, and we can make sure that the way in which we implement them is to the maximum benefit for Albertans.

I want to be clear, Madam Chair. The legal statute or the legislative authority for the option of using corporate opportunity waivers themselves: that principle has not been challenged. What has been challenged instead is the application of the statute under different circumstances, so in this way this is no different than other legal challenges that we see from time to time where two or more parties disagree about the application of the law. There are some incidents of legal disputes between corporations over presumed conflict of

interest issues when waivers were in place, and this highlights the need for very clear, detailed regulatory requirements, the safeguards and the checks and balances that I spoke of earlier, to ensure that we can mitigate the risk of unnecessary legal disputes.

I'll just quote from the same Harvard Law piece that the Member for Edmonton-West Henday cited earlier in some of his remarks on this matter, and that is to say that private equity and venture capital firms

should be sure to include well-crafted corporate opportunity waivers in the transaction documents governing their investments, including nondisclosure agreements, stockholder agreements and, most importantly, the target's certificate of incorporation. Notably, corporate opportunity waivers in certificates of incorporation must be carefully drafted to avoid being declared invalid.

This is part of the reason that we are being so cautious in how we proceed, Madam Chair. I'll note that we are requiring the waivers – again, I said it a few times before, but because it is so important, I'll say it again – to be included in the articles of incorporation or a unanimous shareholders agreement so that everyone involved in that corporation is aware of this tool and how it would be used for that individual corporation. As I mentioned earlier, we will be working out the additional clarity for all of these important pieces in the supporting regulations.

Now, Madam Chair, I'd like to address another question from the Member for Edmonton-West Henday around: who do the changes to the revival time frame benefit, and who would use them? This is shifting gears a bit. I know I spent a lot of my opening remarks talking about questions related to corporate opportunity waivers, but we'll shift into some of the other things that this legislation would do. You know, it's a good question. Corporations, co-operatives, and nonprofits may dissolve for any number of reasons. For example, the entity might choose not to continue their business or their nonprofit activities, for-profit entities may face bankruptcy, and entities may be involuntarily dissolved for failure to file their annual returns. There are many different scenarios, Madam Chair, where this may occur.

Revival time frames were put in place originally in order for the Crown to vest outstanding assets and land left unclaimed by dissolved corporations, co-operatives, and nonprofits. Since that change was first added to the Business Corporations Act, it was found that the time frame of five years from the date of dissolution did not allow a corporation enough time to revive. In many instances corporations or not-for-profits and all of the others who would be eligible to revive their corporation may want to or need to revive their legal structure well after the dissolution date because they have stranded assets that are left over in there and cannot be accessed in any other way.

Maybe it's to unlock those assets for another productive cause, maybe it's to unlock those assets in order to make good on some unpaid obligations: well, Madam Chair, it's important to ensure that we have a tool that will allow for the revival of these dissolved entities in those instances where there are stranded assets. A dissolved corporation or a nonprofit or any interested party who's connected to these entities in some way could also look to revive the entity for a limited purpose; for example, to settle an outstanding lawsuit.

For nonprofits in particular, given the continual changeover in voluntary boards and the resulting difficulty in keeping corporate records, these entities are sometimes unaware that they are struck from the corporate register for failing to file annual returns, and they may want to ensure that their filings are up to date and the nonprofit again has an active status.

I look forward to more discussion on this, Madam Chair.

3:10

The Chair: Any other members wishing to – oh, sorry. Just a reminder to table the document you referenced in your speech.

Any other members wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise this afternoon, and I most definitely appreciate the minister's comments. I'm not sure if he was just about done or still had a ways to go, but he could always join in the debate some more here. Yes. Again, I appreciate some of the clarification that we heard specifically regarding some of the lawsuits that I brought forward from corporations that have already had to go through this process or stakeholders in specific states or parts of the United States.

I also can appreciate that in some respects we have a lot from other jurisdictions. While it would be the first across Canada, we have seen the idea of corporate opportunity waivers in other jurisdictions across North America, so we're not starting from scratch by any means. That's an important piece to recognize though it will be interesting to see, if this were to pass, specifically what kinds of investments we might expect to see. That would be a question that I have continuing through this debate: if the minister has any understanding or idea of how much venture capital we're talking about here or private entity we're talking about here from the discussions that he or anyone from his department or ministry has had in regard to Bill 84.

I think another important question that I would have is just in terms of timelines. Of course, we're being asked to support what we have in the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2021, before us, yet, again, I just want to point out that the bulk of what is going to be accomplished through this legislation or what is being proposed does have to be clarified through the regulations. It's not abnormal for that to be the case, but in circumstances like this, when a framework is put before us but really the details that are to come are so important to continuing this discussion and whether or not we could, you know, potentially or not support such an idea, especially with it being so new to our province and to Canada as well, I think it's important that we are able to reflect on some of the regulations that might come forward.

You know, on one hand I appreciate that this is the way that it often goes, but on the other hand I hope that the minister can also appreciate that there's a lot of discussion that still has to take place on this, a lot of consultation, I hope. I would ask if there is any commitment to public consultation on Bill 84, if it were to pass, as the regulations are being discussed and created. I would be interested to hear from the minister what he envisions that consultation process to look like, if it is going to be strictly with corporations that are going to be affected by this and venture capital organizations and private equity companies that are going to be affected by this. Are there going to be opportunities for the public to come forward and have their say on Bill 84 as well?

At this point, as far as I can tell, there was no formal public consultation on this legislation. I can appreciate that, I'm sure, as the minister laid out, corporations and venture capital companies raised the idea of this and brought it forward, and at this point, obviously, the minister thought it was a good idea. I'd be interested to hear about the timelines for that process to take place and if it will be open to the public. Of course, again, what kind of economic benefit does the minister expect to see if this were to take shape in our province?

Again, I appreciate as well some clarification on the timelines of the revival of companies that had come up. I even believe that we

had some of these discussions when we were in government about this idea, so I thank the minister for that.

Of course, we are seeing in Bill 84 clarification and modernization, some housekeeping of language, as well as some changes to liability, I believe, because of the changes that are being proposed through the corporate opportunity waivers piece within it. I can appreciate that as well. Hopefully, those changes to liability will be enough to ensure that the legislation works as it should and as the minister has committed that it would.

Again, just a continuation of thoughts and wondering in terms of timelines: would this legislation pass, the regulations consultations that might take place; when the minister, if this were to pass, would expect this to go into force.

As well, an initial comment that we heard from the minister regarding the piece specific to opportunity waivers when it comes to acting in a specific way on investment opportunities, not so much on, you know, becoming a director and getting the unanimous shareholder consent, on that piece, but when it comes to the idea of potentially developing allotted land that an individual may have become aware of through one company or corporation but may be of benefit to another organization that they are a part of through their knowledge of that process, from being a director.

I know that the minister said that the process is going to be a lot more clear than it had been in the past, that previously that was possible but now it's going to be a lot easier through the proposals that are being offered through Bill 84. I'd be interested to find out if the minister knows – you know, I think there was maybe an anecdote that often it's taking too long, that the opportunity is no longer there – if the minister has any idea of actual timelines, of how long that process took before and potentially even of how long, I guess, it would be able to be accomplished if this legislation were to be passed as is being proposed.

You know, the idea here in Bill 84 specific to the corporate opportunity waivers is an interesting one. I think that there are always opportunities in being the first to move on such a big change to this process. There are, obviously, opportunities here to bring in venture capital. But it also, in my opinion, could be dangerous to be the first one out the gate. Again, I can appreciate that we have seen this taking place in other jurisdictions across North America, so we can learn from those things.

We heard from the minister. Reflecting on some of the cases that, again, I had brought forward, I have seen more. I can appreciate that this is specific to, you know, disagreements between how things were handled within those relationships and not necessarily about the framework of the corporate opportunity waivers. I can appreciate that. But these are still questions that should be asked when we are seeing those types of concerns within the framework around perceptions of conflict of interest or perceptions of insider information being used to benefit one party or another. I think that these are still important, whether the framework of corporate opportunity waivers holds up, that if we are going to see a rise in these kinds of conflicts, we are doing everything we can within the framework to ensure that the guidelines are clear and, if it were to potentially go to court, that that is also clear. I know, again, that much of this will come through the regulations, that still have to be completed.

Just going back to my prior comments on Bill 84, I hope that the minister and the department will do a fulsome analysis of many of those concerns that I've brought up. In many cases after those decisions have been finalized, there have been rulings that have come out saying that it might be a better system if these types of things are clarified when this framework is being developed, for sure.

3:20

Again, I think that there is an opportunity here. I would be interested to find out how much venture capital the minister imagines will be brought forward if this were to be passed. I think that it is a good opportunity. I would ask the minister if, through his conversations with other jurisdictions across Canada – we heard that mention of working with the federal government to make sure that the legislation being proposed would be compliant as well as with other provinces in those discussions – there are other provinces that are in the process of formally considering moving forward with such amendments to their business corporations acts, with the idea of corporate opportunity waivers. I think that I will likely have more questions as this process goes on. I think that there is an opportunity here. I think that there are also some unknowns, but hopefully we can have some of those questions answered.

With that, Madam Chair, I would love to hear from some of my other colleagues. Hopefully, we'll hear some clarifications from the minister, and very likely, since we are in committee, I will have another opportunity to rise and speak more. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join the debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 84? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise. I just want to thank the minister for providing some clarity around some of the questions that I did ask while we were in second reading. I have some more, I think, based on the information that was provided, again, not because I disagree with what the minister has said.

I guess I'm still trying to wrap my head around the piece around the Securities Act, where the minister has said that the understanding is that it's not going to impact the Alberta Securities Act. Because that piece of legislation interacts across jurisdictions quite frequently – there are other investors that may want to be coming from other provinces – and because this will be unique in Alberta, the piece that I was trying to get an understanding on: I guess an example would be that if someone from Ontario is looking and is sitting on a corporation that is very similar to a corporation that they would like to be a part of in Alberta, because this is a unique piece to Alberta law, does that person still have the ability to be on the board in Ontario versus continuing to be on a board in Alberta?

We are saying in Alberta that this will happen and that this can work. You know, I don't dispute that this may be an incentive for some businesses. I guess the question is: if we reverse it the other way, does that mechanism still apply in those other jurisdictions? Even though there may be an exemption of the Securities Act in Alberta, would that transfer, and does that create a barrier? I think what I'm trying to understand is how this will incentivize investors from other jurisdictions to come to Alberta if it can't be reversed the other way, in the sense that if they have to give up a position in, let's say, B.C. because B.C. decides, well, you can't be on two different boards, you can't have that role, then will it only ever work in Alberta? If that's the case, then all of this investment that could come from other jurisdictions may not be able to come here because it actually will impact positions in other jurisdictions.

That's where I'm struggling with the legislation. Again, I'm not saying that I disagree with it. Just from a legal standpoint I'm trying to understand what the incentive would be. I can understand that if it's a business in Alberta where someone is invested in or sitting as a director on some board in an Alberta company and then sees opportunity in another Alberta company – did that make sense? – this is giving that legal structure to be able to do that. I just don't

know if it will provide that legal structure for the other jurisdiction. I'm hoping that the minister will be able to if not answer that today maybe take that back and find out how that piece would work. The whole argument of trying to bring external investment into Alberta isn't going to work if we can't figure out a way for that structure to exist in partnership. I think this is one of the learnings that's going to come out of being the first out of the gate when it comes to something like this, whether or not the intention of what it would like to do will actually be able to be implemented in a way that actually will work across the country.

The other piece, I think, around that, when we're looking at that cross-jurisdictional component, is the regulations in the sense of whether or not and how the regulations are drafted, because we know that Bill 84 is mostly going to be determined through the regulation, is making sure that those regulations also work in a cross-jurisdictional way. Again, although it may work in Alberta law, if it doesn't align with other regulations in other jurisdictions, then it may still potentially limit the capacity of the investment and/or those individuals being able to leverage the legislation in the way that the intent, I believe, is by the government.

Now, the other piece that I know has come up – and I believe my colleague mentioned it or it's been mentioned in the House before – is the idea of making sure that this can't be then used for a monopoly. We want to make sure that we don't have the same individuals being able to leverage this and all of a sudden we have monopolies in Alberta, with the same individuals sitting on a variety of different boards and the market not being diverse enough to be able to make sure that we're competitive in the market, I guess, would be the easiest way for me to say it. I mean, I'm open to going back and forth maybe in dialogue with the minister if the minister would like to spend some more time speaking. I feel like time may have been cut off for the minister, but it is Committee of the Whole. I mean, I would like to give some more opportunity for the minister to go back and forth. If not, those are the big, key pieces.

Again, Madam Chair, just to clarify, this isn't me saying that I don't think that the intention of the bill is good. I do understand what the government is trying to do. Like I've said previously, sometimes when legislation is drafted, the intent is there. Then we start getting into how it interacts with other pieces of legislation, and then sometimes that means you have to adjust other pieces of legislation to be able to make the intention work. My hope is that, because we are in Committee of the Whole, if there are things that need to be amended to support the intention and to make sure that it's going to align with the other jurisdictions – or maybe it is, and I'm just not totally clear in how the other jurisdictions will interact with the legislation. I'm open to that. I just want to make sure as we move forward, if this is going to be something that is going to be enacted, that if it needs to be tweaked a bit or if there are things that we can be looking at, now is the opportunity to do that so that we're not trying to fix something later if there is an opportunity to fix it now.

Because it is such a big piece of the amendment and because it is about bringing in that investment from other jurisdictions, I just want to make sure that, although I understand what the minister is saying about the security laws working within Alberta, we're able to make sure that all the other jurisdictions can work within it as well. I don't want to see a barrier being created where other investors aren't able to actually do the intention of this legislation, because I believe the minister has good intent. It's just because it's new and we're going to be a unique jurisdiction with this piece. Maybe it's something where the minister knows more about how it works in the States, between state jurisdictions and other people from other states trying to invest in jurisdictions that do this, and

I'm missing that piece. I'm more than willing to hear more about that because I'm actually kind of nerding out on the whole Securities Act and how this is all going to work. I appreciate I've probably gone down a little bit of a rabbit hole that nobody cares about but me, and I'm fine with that.

With that, I'll take my seat and be more than willing to jump back up if the minister doesn't want to.

3:30

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member. I'm always appreciative when someone is nerding out on Service Alberta related matters because I don't have to feel so alone. I think that speaks to something that's important to note, that especially when it comes to the corporate opportunity waivers, this is very complex. It is very nerdy. Inside baseball, I guess, is a good analogy, right? Like, if you're not involved in structuring the corporation, if you're not involved in creating bylaws and articles and dealing with the incorporation affairs of a corporation when they're setting up and getting started and then helping them to navigate interprovincial or international trade, dealing with raising capital, and considering, you know, how all these things work together, then quite frankly you're not really going to be impacted by this. It's not going to touch your life at all, which sort of speaks a little bit to what the Member for Edmonton-West Henday was talking about in terms of the consultation.

There's a reason why this consultation was focused on experts. It was focused on academics in the legal and accounting space. It was focused with practising accountants and lawyers who have very deep expertise in these kinds of affairs and, of course, with other levels of government or other governments, like the federal government or other provinces and territories, who would have corresponding legislation in their jurisdictions. You know, those are the folks that would have more of a hand in understanding how this stuff works in practice whereas ordinary Albertans around their kitchen table: they're not talking at the dinner table about the Business Corporations Act, and they're definitely not talking about: hey, I wonder what a corporate opportunity waiver would look like if it was implemented as a tool that could be used by private companies in Alberta.

That's why the consultation was very broad. I mean, we talked to hundreds of experts in the space, but I'm not sure that a lot would be gained by, you know, going out and just having a survey for all Albertans to say: hey, what do you think about this? It's complex, it's inside baseball, and I think it's worth us having a little bit of back and forth in the Chamber here to just try and make sure that we all are comfortable with: what's the broad vision of what we're trying to accomplish, and do we feel that the right steps are in place to deal with the implementation?

You know, Madam Chair, the devil is always in the details, and I want to assure the members who have been contributing to the debate on this that this is something that I take very seriously. It's something that I've put a lot of my own work into and my department has put a ton of work into, and we're going to continue, should we get the support of the Chamber to pass this legislation, to put that same effort and due diligence into the development of the regulations while still continuing to work with the same experts and others who may put up their hands and say: hey, we are interested in this, and we'd like to weigh in on this.

I'm just kind of looking at some of the notes I've made from some of the conversation that's arisen today. The fear of: could a corporate opportunity waiver result in establishing a monopoly? I don't see that as being maybe a realistic scenario here. You know,

I believe there are antitrust rules that exist to protect Canadians from that kind of a scenario, and this is not going to contradict or supersede any of those rules, so that's good news.

In terms of crossjurisdictional, maybe harmonization might be a way to kind of sum up some of the comments that were coming and the questions of, like, have we considered – because we don't want to have to go and redo this. If we're going to go and make this change, we want to make sure it's going to work. We want to hit the ground running, and I agree with all of that. You know, we've put a lot of time and effort into looking to say: what would be the interactions, if any, with other legislation? The good news is that this won't conflict with the legislation in other jurisdictions. It won't conflict with federal legislation.

Now, tying into, you know – I know the Member for Edmonton-Manning talked specifically about securities legislation as being an area that was of interest, and I guess the way I would look at it is to say that securities legislation provides the rules and the frameworks to talk about: when you are issuing capital or when you're raising capital and issuing shares in your organization, what are the rules you've got to follow? What's the process? How do you do things in a way that is by the book and is above board?

The corporate opportunity waiver, you know, in contrast, is simply a tool that will say: can you make an investment or can you not make an investment? Once you've made that decision based on what the corporate opportunity waiver would permit or not permit, then all of the securities rules about how the issuing corporation issues those shares and raises that investment will still apply, and the good news is that the approach we're proposing to take with the corporate opportunity waivers will not in any way conflict with the Alberta Securities Act.

Again, as I've said, we've talked with Treasury Board and Finance on this, we've talked with the Alberta securities regulator, and we've talked to a number of accounting and legal experts. That's what gives us the confidence that we're moving in the right direction on this. I mean, it's a good question. These are questions that we had, right? You know, we want to make sure that if we're going to do this, we do it well.

Some of the other questions, I think, were, again, very thoughtful. It's like – okay; maybe we've talked about some of the reasons why we would want to do this, which is to help give a tool, an optional tool, that could be used by corporations incorporating in Alberta to raise capital that otherwise would have been unavailable and inaccessible to them. But can we make sure that this isn't going to create an incompatibility with, you know, other companies in other jurisdictions that might want to also come and expand into Alberta? The notion of the corporate opportunity waiver really only impacts the corporation issuing the waiver and the corporation receiving the waiver, so it's not going to stop anyone unrelated from those two parties from making a commitment to enter Alberta, to come register in Alberta, to come invest in Alberta. I mean, certainly, we wouldn't want to be doing anything that would stop investment from coming to Alberta.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The intent here is to make it easier to access capital that otherwise today, without this legislation, would not come to Alberta. I'm confident that, you know, with the work we've done with the legal experts we've consulted and the other jurisdictions we've talked to, this is not going to stop investment from coming into Alberta if someone is using a waiver.

Again, I think another point that's just as important to reinforce is that this is an optional tool. It's not, like, a broad framework that says that everyone in Alberta has to do things this way and thus

everyone who's interested in coming to Alberta must also interact this way if you want to come and do business in Alberta. This is simply saying that if you are in Alberta, this is a tool that you can access that you can't access anywhere else in the country today. In my view, that creates a competitive advantage for Alberta and makes us unique in this respect in Canada, saying that you will have more tools at your disposal, that if they are in your best interest, it will give you more tools to attract more capital and grow your business, expand, create jobs, and reach your fullest potential.

I'll take this opportunity maybe just to pivot to a couple of things that I didn't get a chance to address earlier just out of respect for some of the other members who had raised some comments in previous elements of the debate. I know the Member for Edmonton-Meadows had had some questions, you know, saying that in this Chamber we should be discussing the best interests of the public, so he was asking how this change specifically would be moving our province forward. He mentioned that his constituents have been asking about how this will bring investment back to Alberta and how this will create jobs and ultimately what the purpose of the bill is. I'm happy to answer that question, Mr. Chair.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I mean, at the end of the day, I think that I've been pretty clear in my comments on this legislation that our government is committed to doing whatever we can, to leaving no stone unturned when it comes to ensuring that Alberta is the most attractive jurisdiction in the country to do business, to invest, to create jobs, to grow. I think that, you know, by and large, job creators in this province can see that Alberta is open for business. This government has been taking action for a long time to really drive that point home for Albertans and Alberta businesses.

Why do I say that, Madam Chair? Well, because we've seen the projections from the major banks and economic think tanks all saying that Alberta will lead the country in economic growth and job creation for the next two years. We've seen even in today's fiscal update from the Finance minister that Alberta has added more than 103,000 jobs since the start of this year. That's amazing.

We continue to see more and more investment coming to Alberta. We saw the Dow Chemical announcement that's in the works. That's a multibillion-dollar project in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. We've seen multibillion-dollar investments in hydrogen projects and petrochemical projects.

3:40

We've seen enormous tech-sector growth, which is something near and dear to my heart. We've seen the \$4 billion announcement from Amazon in the new data centre in Calgary. We've seen tech accelerators setting up shop in Alberta. Some of the best ones in the world are starting to set up shop here in Alberta to help facilitate and encourage and support early-stage start-up technology companies to reach their fullest potential.

We've seen venture capital investment take off in this province. You know, in 2018 it was \$118 million, Madam Chair. In 2019 it was \$227 million. In 2020 it was \$455 million. This year, 2021, to date we have \$480 million, and we still have more of the year left to go. That number is only going to grow. Just to add on top of that, we've seen about a billion dollars of economic activity in the film and television industry in Alberta.

Madam Chair, we're seeing such great news in the economy in Alberta, for growing our economy and diversifying our economy, but as I said before, the Business Corporations Act is something that I as Minister of Service Alberta have some influence over and some jurisdiction over. It is yet another thing that I can impact that

will help to make Alberta even more attractive relative to our peers, relative to other jurisdictions in North America, and that's what these changes are all about. This is to give more tools and more clarity to folks who might be wanting to set up a business, or maybe they already have one. This is going to help them to reach their fullest potential and to grow and attract more investment.

That's why we're doing this. That's why I'm so excited about it, Madam Chair. I'm really hoping that we can get this across the finish line for the benefit of all Albertans. I know there may be more comments or questions from folks in this Chamber, and I'm looking forward to more of today's debate.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank the minister for endeavouring to respond to a number of questions that our caucus has had. I did have an opportunity to speak at length to this bill in second reading, but it's my pleasure to get up and speak again.

I have been reaching out to a number of different business associations, venture capitalists around the province to get them to weigh in on this. What I will say is that it appears to be fairly evident that the minister and his team have done some significant consultations with certain associations, including the Alberta Securities Commission, the federal regulators as well, to ensure that this legislation is onside and coincides with existing legislation.

I did have two questions for the minister. One – and I know my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Manning was asking. I think her question, because it's my question as well: if Alberta passes this legislation and is the only jurisdiction in Canada where a corporation, through unanimous consent from shareholders or within their articles if they're a new venture, allows for a director to sit on that original corporation's board and another corporation's board – of course, we know that venture capitalists are experts within a certain space.

The example I used the other day was: you know, let's say that it's a health tech investor. At the moment they cannot sit as a director on two different boards of two companies that are operating in the same space, is my understanding. Part of what this waiver will do, should the shareholders of the first corporation agree, is to allow that venture capitalist to sit as a director on two different company boards. Obviously, the minister and his background: he'd be very familiar with this, that many venture capitalists, if they're investing in a start-up, want to have a say in how the company is being run because it is their capital that's being injected into it. This gives them that opportunity.

So the question is: if you had an investor, let's say, go to get the opportunity waiver from a corporation here in Alberta and they agree to allow the venture capitalist to sit as a director on another company, what if that other company is in another province? The legislation applies to Alberta companies, so in this example you have a director on an Alberta company who then is interested in also serving as a director, let's say, in a company in Ontario. My understanding is that that wouldn't be the case because they don't have that legislation that would allow for that, but I'd appreciate if the minister has some clarity on that.

Then the only other question. When the minister first started his remarks, he talked about, without these opportunity waivers, how challenging it would be to get approval for a director to be able to sit as a director on another company within the same space. But unless it is a new company and in their articles of incorporation that they allow for this, the process is still that unanimous agreement or unanimous consent is required. I appreciate that this provides that tool, but there's still going to be a bit of a time lag in order to get

the approval for them to then be able to sit on two different company boards.

I hope those questions are clear although I'm happy to go back and forth with the minister. I look forward to his response.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity once again to rise in the House and add some more comments to this bill. I also appreciate the minister's attempt, actually rising in the House every time and trying to provide answers to some of the questions raised by my colleagues. I would be interested to hear the answer to the question raised by my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I'm still not very satisfied by the answer the minister gave to my colleague from Edmonton-Manning. The minister did explain that the complex nature of the corporate founding – it's very hard for members to easily understand the nature of this change, and I think that is our job before we say yes or no to any piece of legislation. I would really appreciate if the minister can share some examples, like what exactly this legislation is going to change and going to help.

One of those questions I was trying to raise in my last comments to this bill was coming from real life, real examples. I worked as an insurance broker for the last 16, 18 years. I've seen so many ups and downs and hard and soft markets, a number of those challenges coming from commercial clients and the people who are facing legal challenges and disputes where the price is going up, the project is being purchased, flipped, partners and directors changed, a number of those things. I have quite huge examples where I've been part of that, where I tried to help people attain the legal help to fight the case in court. To me, we are providing, basically, legitimacy to a lot of those issues. Albertans wanted to see it another way around, being added, like, more accountability and transparency around these conflict-of-interest issues within the corporations.

I have a huge example where a party just got some investors to purchase a piece of land. I believe it was around \$10 million. Then the project got appraised for another \$250 million when it was completed. Now those investors who invested \$10 million do not have a capacity to invest another \$200 million. That's where it comes. Like, influential individual venture capitalists and boards of directors: they provided solutions to safe exits to their partners, board members, and become part of another venture for the corporation and bring the other partners based on the appraised value of the project, not the piece of land, get the money from these people – get the money from these people – and secure a mortgage on a \$225 million project based on their appraisals, and then walk away.

3:50

This is still a case that's being – this is probably falling into some Calgary MLAs' areas – challenged in the court. I have a number of those issues. My questions were coming from, actually, the reality, the reality of life. I know many people, not only one client; a number of those people. How is this going to add transparency? That's what I was saying: how is it going to serve or to defend the public interest or the interests of those very people who lose their very hard-earned, lifelong income in those things? As I said, like my colleague said, we are the first jurisdiction in Canada to move forward, to legislate the opportunity waiver into the corporations act. What kinds of benefits is the ministry seeing for this province, and how do you think this legislation is going to address these kinds of conflicts, you know, as legislation, as an act?

I will appreciate it if the minister can just, you know, shed some light on these issues before, I think, requesting support from the opposition on this piece of legislation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members to join the debate on Bill 84 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 84, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2021. I think this is a bill that affects an incredibly complex area of law, and I think we've seen some good discussion back and forth between members surrounding some pretty technical questions here.

I think that what I have to add in the few remaining minutes here is that this bill leaves certain individuals in a position where they may have interests that are not entirely aligned. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, I don't think, but it is something, I think, that is an issue to which we all ought to be live. I think, you know, the concern arises because officers in corporations have duties, duties to their shareholders, primarily a duty to sort of maximize profits. If someone is involved in those positions as an officer in multiple companies which are acting in the same space, potentially they are in competition with one another, and that creates sort of an ethical challenge for the individual involved. Now, certainly, that is to that individual, presumably, to resolve. I'm just a little bit curious about how it is that we ensure that that's a thing that's happening.

I say that because my experience, obviously, is with lawyers and the Law Society. Lawyers will sometimes find themselves acting in instances where there either is a conflict of interest or where there could be what's called sort of a perceived conflict of interest or a possible conflict of interest. That is where the interests aren't necessarily directly conflicting. I think, you know, when you're talking about someone who's on the board of directors of multiple companies that might not be quite the same, who's an officer at multiple companies acting in the same space, you sort of get into that possible conflict situation.

Now, in the case of lawyers, if this is the case, the Law Society is the body which adjudicates that. If someone looks at it and says, "I think I perceive there to be a conflict; I perceive this lawyer to have acted in a place where there was a conflict," that person has a place to bring their complaint – that is to the Law Society, who's an independent agency – and the Law Society will consider the matter and adjudicate whether, in fact, there was a conflict, what the depth of the conflict was, what the remedy ought to be, potentially what the punishment for the individual is. The nice thing is that there's someone to hold people to making those complex decisions in a good way.

You know, the courts are always the sort of holder to account of last resort. I don't know how to put it better than that. In an instance where an individual, according to someone who has an interest in the matter, is perceived to have acted in a conflict-of-interest sort of situation, certainly that individual is likely to be able to bring some sort of action, different actions depending on the circumstances, in the court, and that's fine. The courts – well, at least the Court of Queen's Bench – having sort of inherent jurisdiction kind of leaves them as the adjudicator of last resort. But it's often not the best solution. Litigation tends to be costly and time consuming and often very emotionally trying for all of the people involved. It's often not the very best way to have your concerns addressed, which is why we have many agencies, boards, and commissions. We have bodies

like the Law Society. There are a number of other colleges that govern individuals.

I guess my concern is – and I'm hoping that at some point in the future the minister will address this concern for me. In an instance where there is this possible conflict of interest – and I'm not saying that it's necessarily going to arise, but even in instances where it doesn't arise, there may very well be the perception of that – is there some sort of remedy other than the courts to hold folks to account? I think that's going to be a concern, and I think it's going to be a valid concern that individuals are bringing forward. Again, I'm not necessarily saying that that makes the changes bad, because the minister has outlined, I think, very clearly what the sort of positive implications of the changes are. This is just a question I raise because it's sort of – I don't know. I guess I'm interested in conflicts of interest and ethical things and how people sort of resolve those dilemmas inherently. It's sort of been an area of interest for my whole life.

I'm just sort of interested in whether there is sort of, I guess, a remedy, whether there's guidance – first off, guidance to the individuals – in those situations. Again, the Law Society actually provides some pretty great guidance in terms of, like, how a lawyer can resolve a conflict of interest. I'm just wondering whether there's a body that provides guidance to those individuals about how they ought to walk through that ethical analysis and, in addition to that, whether or not there is a remedy for sort of someone out there in the public, probably a shareholder of one of the aforementioned companies or someone who feels they're in some way harmed – I guess it doesn't really matter from what position they come – if they feel that an officer or director has sort of acted in a situation of conflict because they're sitting on the boards of two companies that are operating in the same space, potentially in competition with one another, what the remedy is and whether or not there's a better remedy than court.

To allow some time to consider that long and complicated question, Madam Chair, I would now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:00

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: I move that the committee rise and report Bill 84.

The Chair: Rise and report progress?

Ms Issik: Progress. Sorry. Yes.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 84.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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. So carried.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 75 Arts Professions Recognition Act

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Orr]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members wishing to join debate on Bill 75 in third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 75, Arts Professions Recognition Act. Certainly, there are changes that are contained in this bill that we are very supportive of, but mostly the way, I guess, things go in policy debates, this bill doesn't go far enough. I will elaborate on how it doesn't go far enough. I would say that it's an important piece of legislation, especially from my own riding's perspective as well. People come from many different backgrounds, cultures, talents, and there are many who are into music, arts, and this profession. It is important that they be recognized for the work that they do and that they be recognized as artists for their talents.

However, what we have noticed is that during the COVID-19 pandemic they have been impacted very significantly, and they didn't see much support from this government. Throughout the pandemic they were, I guess, unable to have venues, and they were watching for the spaces so they can earn their paycheques. The approach that government took around the pandemic certainly impacted every sector of the economy, including this sector as well. Oftentimes government will continue to deny that there is any risk of restrictions relating to the pandemic until the last minute, and then without notice government will impose wholesale restrictions on the economy and on Albertans. That certainly impacted this industry a fair bit.

When we were talking to those artists, those stakeholders, I think that contractual protections, recognition of their work, is certainly an issue that is important to them. It is important for them because it enhances their working conditions. It enhances their economic conditions. Like everyone else, like any other Albertan, they are entitled to fair compensation and recognition of their work. However, I guess, during the pandemic they didn't get the kind of support that they needed and they deserved.

A couple of weeks ago I was at an event that was the launch of a music video by Jem Productions Ltd. in northeast Calgary. The name of the video is *Calgary My Cowboy City*. Essentially the video is just highlighting the city and its surroundings, natural beauty, its culture. A number of artists who were part of that, I had the opportunity to talk to them: Sangeeta Melo D; Dr. Deepak Mahna, the producer of the video, of Jem Productions Ltd.; and there were some other guests as well, Sohail Raja, Jamal Raja, people from related fields but not part of the video but mostly people who are interested in the arts, people who relate to this area, and some of them are artists. I didn't hear from even one of them that the government did any consultation whatsoever with anyone in the northeast. There are a number of music academies there, for instance Sarb Akal Music Society. That's huge, and I believe on at least one or two occasions they have played in the Federal Building in government programs as well. I didn't hear from any of them that they were consulted.

I think for two reasons those consultations are important. One, when government hears directly from those that this bill relates to, chances are they will get the issues right and they will get the legislation right. The second thing is that I think it's important from an inclusion and diversity standpoint as well that government consults broadly and includes voices from diverse communities like

in northeast Calgary, the one I am referring to. Their music, their art is part of Alberta's art and Alberta's art industry, Alberta's culture, Alberta's diversity. They deserve to be consulted. However, the government didn't do that. The feedback that I was getting from them was, I guess, positive in a sense that the bill is recognizing them, but again the feedback was that this bill is not going too far.

Section 2 of the bill says that "a public entity shall undertake, as far as it considers reasonable and appropriate, to respect, honour and in good faith abide" by the agreements. Then "public entity" is defined in section 1: "'public entity' means the Government of Alberta or a public agency to which the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act applies."

4:10

So the initiative of this bill is good. It's recognizing artists, their work. It is a good step towards making sure that they get fair compensation, but the provision contained in this bill is just limited to government and its APAGA agencies. It only applies to public entities while most of the work that they do is outside the government of Alberta's agencies. What about those who play in the Genesis Centre for cultural events? These are huge events; for instance, when there is a Diwali celebration, and then there are other cultural celebrations, the Bengali New Year's celebration. There are often many artists who are performing at those events, making those events attractive. They are the ones who help those organizations to even bring the crowd together, bring people together, bring communities together. They will not be protected by this legislation. Oftentimes if I happen to be downtown and visit the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, he will take me to places where live music is going on. Those artists are playing in those places. What about those artists? They're not covered by this legislation.

So while it's good that government wants to recognize artists, government is leaving out much of the recognition, much of that work that happens outside government and government agencies. That's a huge shortcoming of this bill. I do know that my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs has advocated for artists, has advocated for their better working conditions, for their fair compensation. She was in contact with many stakeholder organizations, and she tried to make those changes. She tried to make sure that this act is more broad in its reach and covers artists in every setting, in settings beyond the government of Alberta and its agencies. But the government was again not willing to work with the opposition to make this bill better.

As I mentioned, when I was talking to many of those artists in northeast Calgary, one, not often were they part of any consultation whatsoever, and, two, their concerns were that they seldom play at government functions or public agency functions. They're playing in their communities. They're playing in their rec centres, community centres. They play or perform at their cultural events. They wanted some assurance that this bill will protect them in those settings as well, and they're rightfully disappointed that this bill does not go that far.

While it's a good first step, I think government had an opportunity to do much more with it. Alberta's art industries are a vital part of our economy. They contribute significantly to our GDP. They help us attract tourism and actually other economic opportunities. Had this bill recognized all their work in every setting across this province, that would have been way better, but the bill clearly falls short. I think still that the government always has opportunity to do better and give some security to artists so that everyone – it doesn't matter who is hiring their services – is bound to enter into contracts with them, to honour their contracts, and provide fair compensation

for the work they do, recognize the value they bring to our communities, to our events, to our celebrations.

With that, I will take my seat. I will still be supporting this legislation but at the same time will urge the government to consider making this bill a bit better by expanding its reach to all settings where artists play or perform or offer their services.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really excited to speak today to the Arts Professions Recognition Act. I just want to say thank you, through you, to my colleague the Minister of Culture for bringing this legislation forward. I know I've talked a few times in this Chamber about being a bit of a tech nerd, but what a lot of folks in this Chamber may not know is that I'm also a musician.

I grew up in a house that listened to music all the time, and it was really a formative part of my upbringing. I think I was about eight years old when I first learned to play the piano. By grade 9 I taught myself how to play guitar, eventually learned acoustic, electric, and bass guitar. I want to learn drums someday – it's on my bucket list – but we'll get there someday. You know, I spent a lot of time playing music in my church growing up. That was kind of where I started to learn how to play in a band with other musicians. It's always been a part of me. It's been a hobby for me.

It actually ended up that in about 2012, you know, I thought to myself: "Hey, you know what? I want to just try and be a little bit more involved in the local arts scene. I want to get plugged in with a band. I want to start gigging more regularly. I want to try this just for fun." So I went to Kijiji and looked up the musicians-wanted ads and tried a couple and didn't really have much chemistry there. But I ended up stumbling onto one, and they were looking for a keyboard player. I ended up trying out and got accepted to join a band called Rend. And you know what, Madam Speaker? That was one of the best parts of my life. I spent two years gigging with them. We did about 250 shows together all across Canada. I probably spent 30 to 40 hours a week doing music: rehearsing, writing, performing, travelling, et cetera. I did that all on top of being a venture capital investor at the same time. So it was a lot of late nights, a lot of long weekends, but you know what? It was so much fun, and I learned so much.

I had the privilege of playing alongside some really outstanding musicians, all of whom graduated from Grant MacEwan here, which is a prestigious music school, which has a very impressive music program. You know, I was the only musician in that band that didn't actually have the formal training, so it helped me to up my game. It showed me what professional touring musicians actually have to do.

Some highlights of that for me are that I got to play all kinds of great live music venues in Alberta. Of course, you know, one that people have talked about in this Chamber before, the Starlite Room, is a great one in downtown Edmonton. I mean, I've gone there to see a lot of shows, but it was so cool for me the first time I actually got to play a show there. I remember that one time I got to open for the band called Electric Six, which were formed in the '90s. They're from Detroit, and they've had some great success. So being able to open for them was really cool. I got to meet them and learn from them. I got to play at a festival called Sonic Boom, which is hosted by the local radio station Sonic radio here in Edmonton, sharing a stage with some legendary acts, including Dallas Green. I mean, I was closer to Dallas Green than I am to you, Madam Speaker, on that day. I got to be on the side of the stage while he was doing his headlining act. I got to meet, you know, the Quebec artist Half Moon Run. They were performing on the same stage as me.

4:20

It was so much fun, Madam Speaker, and I just learned so much from all of these amazing artists who have really invested so much into honing their craft and who, by every sense of the word, are true professionals. You know, I of course never quite made it to the same heights as them, and that's okay, but I got to have a glimpse of it. I got to have some fun with it, and, like I said, I did about 250 shows in that time frame.

I think the highlight for me, the biggest highlight, was in 2014. I got to perform at the Edmonton music awards here, over at the old museum beside Government House, and my band actually won rock recording of the year at the Edmonton music awards that year, so I can say that I'm an award-winning musician. I never saw a dime from it.

I say all of that to say that I've lived through a lot of what artists in Alberta have lived through. I've seen the scramble for gigs. I've seen the scramble to collect, you know, the fees from the folks that you've done gigs for. I've seen the challenges of negotiating contracts when maybe contract law isn't exactly your expertise and you just want to focus on your art. I've seen the challenge of having to invest in so much equipment, musical instruments, vehicles, effects units, guitar amps, all of that kind of stuff, and then hauling that around at 3 in the morning, tearing down after a show in the dead of winter and having to load your car.

I understand what the gigging life is like. I know it's hard, and I have so much respect for those artists who have pursued this as their profession and who are making this their life's work, so I just want to give a shout-out to all of those artists across Alberta and across Canada who are doing exactly that, because I will not see my artistic pursuits through to that full level of doing it as a profession for the rest of my life. For me, I will always be a hobby musician who dabbled in it for a couple of years as a gigging musician, but I say that to say that I have lived through just a fraction of what artists in Alberta live through, and I have so much respect for them.

That, Madam Speaker, is why I'm just so proud of what the Minister of Culture is doing with this act. He's bringing the Arts Professions Recognition Act forward to send a signal to artists across Alberta that we believe in you and that Alberta's government wants to promote greater economic security for you and to protect your freedom of expression and to provide professional recognition for Alberta's artists. This is an important step to supporting those hard-working artists across Alberta on their journey, wherever they may be at, to reaching their fullest potential.

I think this is some important work. It's a great first step, and I know that the minister has talked about, you know, a lot of his passion for the arts and what his plans are to support artists going forward. I'm just so excited to see where he's going to go with this, because I think Alberta has generated so many outstanding artists, and we have so many up-and-coming artists in this province who I think have a really, really bright future, and I'm confident that, thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Culture and thanks in part to this act, that future is going to be even more bright, Madam Speaker.

I just appreciate the opportunity to offer a little bit of my personal insight on the arts and also my personal support for this bill and for the minister's leadership on this file. Thank you.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act, in . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Third reading.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

I just wanted to say thank you to the Minister of Service Alberta for kind of walking through that trip down memory lane. You know, I think about the Starlite Room; when I went there, it was the Rev, the first time I saw The Smalls. There are just so many wonderful memories that I have there, and, you know, hearing you talk about your passion for music and being inspired to play, it's important that we are able to, like you said, express ourselves in that way. I'm an alumni of Grant MacEwan and have some amazing friends that did go through the music and arts program there, and they are, in my opinion, successful musicians. I've gone to their shows and cheered them on, and I think it's wonderful. I really appreciate just how you shared your experience and your passion for the arts. I hear all of everything that you said . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, just a reminder to direct your comments through the chair even though they're very kind.

Ms Goehring: Yes. Sorry, Madam Speaker. You know, in listening to all of those beautiful memories and giving shout-outs to the artists and everything, I think it's wonderful to hear that.

What I didn't hear was what exactly this bill is doing to actually support artists. The hon. minister mentioned that he had played 250 shows, and out of the list that he gave, only one of them was government funded, and that was for an award ceremony at the museum. So I'm curious. His story is not unique, and from all of the artists that I've heard, they're not asking for improved contracts with government or government entities. There's been a history of government setting the standard of how artists should be compensated, how they should be treated, and, yes, the government provides a wonderful opportunity for artists to be paid appropriately and advertised appropriately, but the minister explained that he himself had done 250 shows, and I would suspect that more than half of those were in a category of other.

When it comes to Sonic Boom, I don't think that they are a government entity. The Starlite Room certainly isn't a government entity, and the majority of our artists play venues, perform theatre in nongovernmental spaces. When we hear this government talk about this true passion for the arts, it's beautiful to hear that, and artists deserve that recognition. However, they also deserve respect, and they deserve a piece of legislation that actually supports them. They deserve pay that's adequate. They deserve contracts outside of government and government entities.

Last week in Committee of the Whole I proposed four amendments. Unfortunately, all four amendments were rejected by the government, and I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, about the number of e-mails, phone calls, social media messages that I received out of frustration, anger on: why would this government say on one hand that they want to support and enhance and create a wonderful space for artists yet turn down the amendments that they asked for to make it, actually, a piece of legislation that could be better and, like the minister said, a good first step? They rejected it.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I continue to talk to the arts community and the artists and the organizations to tell them to continue to advocate, to continue to fight, but they're feeling defeated. They came to our opposition with their ideas, after they brought them to government and government didn't respond, and they said, "Can you bring our ideas forward?" which we did, and then they were voted down. So people are upset that some of the simple amendments, that would include anybody that's entering into a contract with an artist, were rejected. That doesn't say that this government supports and respects artists.

When we talked about the importance of making sure that, you know, Alberta's story is shared and that there is the culture and the tradition that's so beautiful in this province, Indigenous artists want to be recognized in that. So, again, we proposed language that would include Indigenous artists. Unfortunately, that, too, was rejected. Through this piece of legislation, Bill 75, the feedback that I'm hearing from artists is: we're hearing a lot of words. We have, you know, a very vague piece of legislation that actually does nothing to create a safe, secure, stable working environment for artists. They rejected our feedback. They're angry, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

You know, we live in a province that's democratic, and you have opportunities to make changes in legislation. The arts community came to us and said: this government isn't listening; can you please bring forward our ideas? Here we are in third reading, and this piece of legislation that was introduced, that artists rejected, is exactly the same as when it was introduced. There wasn't consultation going into the bill. They used a piece of legislation that's 10 years old from another province. They made this piece weaker than that legislation from Saskatchewan and then refused the amendments that the arts community themselves asked to introduce.

Here we are at a place where artists are saying that this piece of paper means nothing. It's language that's vague. It's nice to say how important they are, but it does nothing to improve quality of life for an artist. It doesn't do anything to ensure that they're paid fairly outside of government and government entities. It does nothing for those that are typically self-employed to give them sick pay, WCB benefits.

The other piece that they were talking about is – sure, this tool kit sounds wonderful. They haven't seen it. Some of it is posted online at this point, but there are some glaring things missing. They want to know: is the government going to help us do a dispute resolution? The thing with artists is you often hear “struggling artists,” and they're struggling because governments aren't supporting them to be able to make a living in their field.

One of the leaders in the music industry that I was speaking to last week said he used to talk about the booming arts scene in the '70s and the '80s in the province and how bands were just thriving here. He said he used to encourage people to come to Alberta. He said with the way that this government is treating artists, he can't with good conscience encourage an artist to come here. He said it breaks his heart as a born-and-raised Albertan musician in leadership. He can't say: come to Alberta; it's the best place for artists. He said it could be, though. If we had a government that really listened to what the arts community needed, Alberta could be leading in the arts community.

We have so much talent that is here in our province. You can go, I would say, to any corner of this province, wherever there's some sort of live art being performed, and walk away feeling amazing about what you just experienced. I wouldn't say “watched.” I would say “experienced,” because when you go to live music, you feel it. When you go to a dance performance, you can feel the sorrow in a ballet. You can feel the pain in an opera. But unless you're playing at the Jubilee or here on Canada Day, this government is saying that you don't need to be in a contract.

They're saying they want to provide a safe place for emerging artists. Well, as an emerging artist you don't break through and start at the Jubilee. You travel and you go to those dingy little places and those small little fun pubs, those intimate little settings. Because they're smaller and not government funded doesn't mean they shouldn't be fairly compensated or doesn't mean they shouldn't have a right to enter into a contract. It's just really unfortunate to see that so many artists are so upset with this government when this

really could have been a really beautiful piece of legislation. It really could have supported artists, especially during this pandemic.

The live events were the first to close and the last to open, I would arguably say the biggest hit in this pandemic. Artists saw the venues where they had their events, where they showcased their art, where they performed live close. As of the summer 16 live music venues closed. Not temporarily; they were shuttered. That's 16 fewer places in the province of Alberta where an artist can go and earn a paycheque. Artists were hopeful that this piece of legislation was going to give them opportunity. It was going to really give action – although this is beautiful language that this government shares about how important the arts are, the reality is all we've seen from this government are cuts.

We've seen the AFA cut. It's really upsetting when we talk about how Alberta really needs to look at our economy and how we can diversify it. The arts community has been screaming: we're here; we want to help. They're creative thinkers, Mr. Speaker. This is a community that is incredibly resourceful. They think outside of the box. From the very beginning of the pandemic they have been pleading with government to be a part of the economic recovery, yet they're not at the table. They don't have a voice. I can tell you that when it came to artists and venues opening, they had some of the most creative and safe ways to gather. It's a human need to be able to gather amongst other people. It's so important.

I think most of us got through, are getting through this pandemic because of the arts, whether you picked up a paintbrush for the first time or you picked up that guitar that you had put down 10 to 20 years ago. These are things that support our mental health. They support our well-being. They tend to bring a smile to your face. Instead of doing things to really support this community, this government has just refused to recognize and action the importance of the arts community.

I think when I hear from the arts community about their feelings about Bill 75 – I tried. I put four amendments forward that came directly from them. I can't support this piece of legislation that really does nothing to actually enhance the experience of being an artist in the province. If all the government did was took the legislation from Saskatchewan and plunked it in here, it would be better than this. It omitted some of the key pieces out of that legislation, that excludes the potential for artists to enter into a contract. It just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

The arts community is struggling, and we still rely on them for our entertainment, for our mental health. I know tonight the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and I are hosting an event, Art From the Unknown. It's an event that she's been hosting for years now in her constituency, and any time I've participated in it, I've come away just feeling good. Last year it was the first time that it was done virtually, and I wasn't sure how I would feel about it. This year it's virtual again, and I'm looking forward to it. Being able to hear an artist express how they came to their piece, how they were motivated to create this art that so many others can enjoy is inspirational. It gives me hope that there are still these people in our province that are doing this incredible . . . [Ms Goehring's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 75, Arts Professions Recognition Act. I would like to applaud the minister for bringing this initiative that will uphold arts as a profession. I likewise applaud the previous minister for starting and laying the grounds for this legislation.

4:40

I want to also express my appreciation to all the artists and stakeholders who shared their thoughts and interest during the engagements conducted by the government. In September 2019 the previous minister met in person with representatives from the arts community to gather feedback that contributed to the creation of the bill. There were also more than 1,800 responses received during the online survey conducted from the stakeholders in Alberta: Alberta's arts organizations, professional artists, hobby artists, and art sector workers. The stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, have generally expressed support to the proposed legislation, and recent engagement continues to show support for it.

The purpose of this legislation is to recognize that art inspires Albertans. It helps to communicate who we are and preserves our culture from one generation to the next. Bill 75, Mr. Speaker, seeks to formally acknowledge artists' value and contributions to Alberta and promote their work and their rights to help make their artistic enterprises profitable. It will also protect artists' economic and contractual rights and embodies the government's continued commitment to freedom of artists' artistic expression while at the same time encouraging respect to Alberta's artists and their associations.

This bill will model the way for private and nonprofit employers and contractors in Alberta's economy and help legitimize the professional nature of artists' work. It also defines a professional artist, who in general earns income, all or some, through an artistic practice and meets at least three of the six criteria set forth in the bill, which are:

- (A) the artist [is a recipient of] public or peer recognition . . .
- (B) the artist promotes or markets the artist's work . . .
- (C) the artist's work has been presented to the public by means of exhibitions, publications, performances, readings, screenings or other means;
- (D) the artist has received training or acquired traditional knowledge . . .
- (E) the artist has membership in an artists' association or in an organization representing the artist's artistic field . . .
- (F) the artist holds copyright in the artist's work and has received royalty or residual payments based on that copyright.

This bill is intended also to support emerging or amateur artists by signalling that the arts represents a viable career and are recognized as a profession. Through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts the government supports programs designed to provide training, experience, and opportunities for artists of all levels.

Since the beginning of time artists communicated information about the culture and values of individuals and society, often more effectively than verbal conversation ever could. For example, we can see the totally philosophical emphasis of the great Plato in Raphael's fresco called *The School of Athens*. You can see the inner desire for human beings in secular society break free from their limited humanity in god-like fashion when you look at the Michelangelo's unfinished statue *The Captives*.

Alberta has its own culture unique to Canada, and our province's cultural industries are an important part of preserving Alberta's community for future generations. You can see some of Alberta's unique Indigenous culture in stories and the painting of world-renowned Indigenous artist Alex Janvier. You can hear the sound of the prairie spread in the country music of artists like Brad Paisley. This bill, Mr. Speaker, will be able to support efforts to promote Indigenous artists within Alberta and beyond.

Being part of the arts is not an easy lifestyle. The majority of artists, 52 per cent, are self-employed, which is much higher than the self-employment rate for all Albertans.

Artists can receive substantially less income than other types of workers. They can struggle to gain respect for their work or their career choices, which can sometimes result in challenges with fair compensation, and of course due to the current pandemic many artists are currently facing financial hardship as they have experienced a loss in income.

The Arts Professions Recognition Act will help to encourage investment in our most important resource, Alberta's people. The arts are an important sector for Alberta's economy. According to the 2016 census there were 44,880 Albertans employed in arts, entertainment, and recreation. An analysis by Hill Strategies of the 2016 census shows that there are 13,300 artists living in Alberta, 8 per cent of all artists in the country. In 2019 the visual and applied arts, live performance industries contributed approximately \$1.3 billion in GDP and sustained nearly 20,000 jobs in Alberta.

Since the government introduced the film and television tax credit, which has been a massive success in attracting major film industry projects to this beautiful province, we have seen huge multinational productions filming in Alberta. The tax credit offers a refundable Alberta tax credit certificate on eligible Alberta production and labour costs to corporations that produce films, television series, and other eligible screen-based productions in the province and together with Bill 75, Mr. Speaker, could boost confidence among our local artists in this industry for a huge and brighter future in their careers. I look forward to seeing familiar scenery in some of these upcoming films.

Like I mentioned a while ago, Mr. Speaker, this important piece of government legislation, Bill 75, was developed through engagement with a wide range of arts stakeholders to ensure the act reflects the interests of artists. It is just one more initiative in a suite of programs and services that support artists and Alberta's arts sector. There will be resources available to artists developed through the implementation of this act within the next year, and the government is taking care not to duplicate resources already offered by the artist associations and arts service organizations.

The provincial government already provides a variety of support for our arts sector through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Alberta media fund, Alberta Culture Days, the Alberta artist in residence and arts ambassador grant program, and the Month of the Artist in September, and through the Arts Professions Recognition Act Alberta's community will promote greater economic security, freedom of expression, and professional recognition for Alberta's artists.

It is similar to legislation in other provinces such as Saskatchewan's artists professions recognition act. Other provinces like Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador have adopted similar legislation over the years.

However, Bill 75 goes even further in an effort to support the government's goal of growing the arts sector here in Alberta. This bill will promote the importance of contracts when engaging artists for service, ensuring fair financial treatment for artists. It also focuses on government leading by example, advocating that individuals, organizations, and businesses should pay artists a fair compensation for their work. No one should expect artists to work for free or for exposure or subject them to unfair working conditions in the commission of their work. This proposed act would affirm that artists working anywhere in Alberta have the right to a contract. Bill 75 respects artists' contractual rights by ensuring that artists should be able to enter into a formal agreement, whether on a not-for-profit or for-profit basis, in exchange for artistic products or activities. It will also encourage greater respect for freedom of expression, the arts and artists as professionals, and their associations.

4:50

Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act, is a clear statement from the government that art is work and an important economic driver that creates jobs and helps with Alberta's recovery. The arts professions act encourages investment in Alberta's most important resource, its people. It's also an important step in meeting Alberta's government's ambitious commitment to grow Alberta's culture industries by 25 per cent over the next 10 years.

I want to thank the minister for bringing forward this important bill, the previous minister for starting the good work, and the support of all artists and stakeholders. I look forward to supporting this bill, and I encourage all of the members to support this piece of legislation as we promote the value of arts and artists in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in third reading to Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act. You know, at the beginning of this fall session there was, I think, some anticipation not just in the arts community but just generally in our population here in Alberta that we have an opportunity to sort of open up and have things to start to look forward to as the COVID situation had changed. I mean, of course, it's a very tenuous change at best, and we see from the latest information that we still have to be on our guard for health and safety, first and foremost.

I think that Bill 75 was hopefully aspirational for artists and the general population that does support the arts, that indeed this provincial government could follow the lead of other jurisdictions across Canada and, indeed, across the world to help support probably what was hit harder than most other industries in our society and in any society. That is the entertainment industry, if I could characterize it that way, in the broadest sense, performance art in particular but not just performance art, by any means; the myriad of festivals that we have across the province of Alberta, the venues that live music and other forms of art and dance and so forth did house and support along the way. Live theatre, of course, is just a huge part of the Alberta cultural tradition in all corners of this province.

As I said, and we've heard it many times, it's absolutely true that the arts took probably the deepest and the heaviest and the longest hit of all industries here in the province of Alberta. Venues were closed, revenue was cut right off, and it became very tenuous. We know already that the arts community, you know, doesn't enjoy the same level of income that the rest of the province has. I think there's an average of something like \$30,000 or so for an annual income for artists here in the province of Alberta, which is very difficult and very marginal. Of course, many artists will have other jobs to try to supplement their incomes so that they can make ends meet and live above the poverty line, but it's a tough go.

When Bill 75 was presented here, there was great anticipation. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it was met very soon after with acute disappointment. Of course, what we were looking for, I think, in this bill was a way by which we could support the recovery of the arts community here in the province of Alberta. I would venture to say that Bill 75 falls far short of that goal.

What we should have seen in this bill, for example, are COVID supports that could spread and help with that recovery. We saw that you had the stabilize program here in the province of Alberta, and the adapt-and-innovate funding, stabilize donation-matching stream, and the stabilize live music grant program. In each of those

areas we saw that there was either an inadequate or an unequal distribution of emergency funding, and many, many areas were entirely excluded. Everybody thought that, well, Bill 75 is coming along; it will remedy that situation. But, in fact, it just actually sought to ignore, quite deliberately, I think, the obvious inadequacy and inequality of the COVID supports for the arts programs that had existed here across this province over the last what is now almost two years. That was the first disappointment, that it was missing the opportunity at the very time when we could talk about reopening and stabilizing the arts industry here in the province. Bill 75 came through and was found wanting.

The second part of Bill 75 that, again, was deeply disappointing was this whole idea around paying for services rendered by artists, by performing musicians for music, other performances from live theatre, dance, and the like. Again, this idea of Bill 75 talking about contracts, around how an artist and a person contracting, let's say, live music should be engaging in a contract with those people, I mean, it was aspirational – right? – but it sort of just simply described the situation as it already exists, Mr. Speaker, in the province and in many other places across North America.

This whole idea that the government would set the example by paying musicians and having a contract for musicians, for example, I mean, that is pretty much the standard as it existed for a long time already. If you could have a government contract to play a gig here in the province on a stage outside of the Legislature or what have you, then of course there was that expectation that you would be paid the wage set by, you know, a certain standard and have a contract to ensure that you would be paid and compensated in that way. This bill simply was just a reiteration of what already exists out there in the market for musicians. There was no change, right? No musician was going to play for free for the province of Alberta. I mean, that is absolutely ridiculous, and it goes against both conventional wisdom and a long history of how the music industry works here in the province of Alberta.

What people were actually looking for is a standard and an expectation for contracts to be used and to be honoured in private industry – right? – so that you could play at a concert venue, you could play at a local restaurant, or you could play at a festival and that expectation could be enshrined in law, that you would be bound to a contract to pay for services rendered as a musician, as a dance artist, as a theatrical troupe, and so forth. That's what people were looking for. They were looking for that extension to a new standard that would allow certainty in being able to pursue their profession.

So often people look at playing music or dance or theatre and so forth as some sort of hobby that people will pursue. Indeed, there is a continuum of pursuing that very thing. The Minister of Service Alberta, you know, described it fairly to his own personal experience, but you do not set a standard based on the notion that you pursue music or any other form of arts as a hobby, right? That notion undermines the professionalism that allows the other people, who don't just pursue it as a hobby, to move into that continuum of a professional artist, whatever medium they happen to be using, and they need to be protected by law in order to do that properly. That's what we do here. We support and encourage different things that the population of Alberta does, but we protect them. We don't just encourage. We enshrine law to ensure that they do get to pursue that thing and be compensated and safe and secure in that pursuit.

5:00

That's how other jurisdictions have done it. You don't just have a spontaneous eruption of culture in the province of Quebec without considerable provincial support, both in law and in funding, to ensure that you have a vibrant place for artists to go and to thrive. It just doesn't happen out of the air. It's not just like, hey, a slap on

the back and away you go, right? It's a deliberate use of the law and a deliberate use of investment to ensure that our arts industry will thrive here in the province of Alberta.

Bill 75 hits the debate here this fall. People have high expectations, and they are disappointed, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. I know that our hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs had solicited, you know, just how people felt and what their hopes and what their aspirations were for Bill 75 and put in a yeoman's effort to create some amendments that would help to buttress it, not to salvage what needs to be done but at least to maybe make Bill 75 into a stepping stone so that people could say, "Okay; well, here we go," especially with contractual arrangements for services rendered as an artist, right? I mean, that's the baseline that is missing in this bill. That amendment and three other amendments were dismissed by the government.

You know, well, I'm always happy to try to support any arts legislation. I mean, it definitely catches my interest. I mean, the corporate tax amendment and all these other ones: they sort of have a different visceral reaction for me. But with an arts one, for sure, straight away I'm looking for the best way to move forward, looking for anything we can grab onto to perhaps help to build culture and a thriving arts community here in the province of Alberta. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I just did find this bill wanting.

What I noticed as well – and, again, this is something that the government can always learn from or us in the Official Opposition as well, to a certain extent – is that, you know, it's sort of that the debate descended into a circular argument somehow. We said that, well, as the one amendment, the key one, that I would have found to be a game changer for us, which is to extend the obligation for a contractual arrangement to be made with an artist for services rendered from not just a government entity but other entities, too – I think that's kind of what the Saskatchewan legislation did outline, and good for them, right? People in Saskatchewan are leading the way. Someone took the Saskatchewan legislation off the shelf here in this province, pretended that that is what they were putting forward here, and it was missing that vital element, which is, again, to make sure that you are compelling a contractual arrangement to be made for services rendered for an artist.

As I said, this sort of descended into a circular argument. We put this forward, and the minister was here and, you know, had the audacity to say: "Oh, well, we already have that in contractual law, and they can just engage in contractual law," sort of mansplaining this thing to us. We said: "Well, yeah, for sure, we already have contractual law. Of course, it applies to everybody, but it's found wanting in the very industry that we're talking about here." How do we change and buttress that to make sure that it's actually being utilized? You make laws, right?

Laws are not just red tape, right? I know my hon. friend showed me his awesome tie yesterday that he got for services rendered for trying to reduce red tape. You know, laws are not red tape. They can be a way by which you can pave the way to create something better. That's what was missing in Bill 75. It was obvious, and that's the part that really just, you know, I think, sent the debate of this particular bill spinning into circles, which I don't really appreciate.

In that respect, in terms of not addressing the immediate emergency COVID response that we did require, I mean, let's talk about the venues as well. Like, you don't have art – let's use music, say, as an example – without the venues. We know that we lost many – was it 16 or 17? – specific live venues, which are a rare commodity in this day and age, Mr. Speaker. They went out of business during these last 18 or 19 months, right? Those are sort of irreparable losses, very difficult to get back.

There was already a problem with those places, having, you know, just a shortage of them. What happens, of course, is that you

need to have a critical mass of live music venues so that artists can build tours, especially in the summer, right? You build a tour, and you have to have a place. You can hop from place to place to place across Alberta, across western Canada. They have to be sort of spaced out because the chances are that the musicians are driving because they don't have enough money to fly between those places. Every time you lose one of those venues on the chain, as you're moving across, let's say, western Canada, it decreases the viability for acts to be able to tour. If you lose that place, you know, any given place, really, then that just makes it that much more difficult.

Then the festival situation. I mean, festivals are another huge element that are lost in this bill as well.

The Speaker: We'll have to hear about festivals another time.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, and thank you for all of the debate and the conversations around this. There are just a couple of things that I wanted to mention. When we're looking at a piece of legislation like this and the importance of what it is to elevate the artists, there are always going to be opportunities to tweak and change later, down the line.

I think that as any culture and group evolves, coming through it – I remember the MLA for Calgary-McCall was talking earlier about ethnic organizations and ethnic groups. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts is actually doing some amazing work with outreach in particular in ethnic communities. I know that with the privilege of having been the former minister and with the new minister of multiculturalism as well, bringing people into this House, in particular, which is their House, and sharing those cultural pieces, who they are at the core, and how we've built Alberta together from all of these beautiful backgrounds, so many, everything from Ukrainian dancing to bharata natyam, which is a south Indian dance, we've had such an immense – you know, one of the biggest privileges of having sat in that position was seeing those folks come into this House, into their home, to be able to present and show their culture.

I remember when we were sitting in opposition. I think it was when the previous government had had their first Diwali presentation here. They brought in some of the dancers into the rotunda – I don't know if you remember that – and it was beautiful. I'm fairly certain that at the time that government, just like us, did honorariums and honoured those people when they came in to do those performances. Yeah. We've already been leading by example, so I'm not disputing that, for sure. But suggesting somehow that consultations weren't done with ethnic organizations, especially given the fact that we've had so many opportunities to speak with them, directly and indirectly, over the course of COVID, Mr. Speaker – over the course of COVID everything was done online. There was just a tremendous amount of innovation from musicians and artists in general across the board, whether that was, you know, showing art exhibits online.

There was some amazing work that was done tying in Alberta and Canadian history to some of the spaces in Alberta in particular – we have, I believe, over 261 historical spaces in Alberta that are beautifully showcased – but more than that, bringing that historical perspective into the music and the arts and all of that. When I was travelling around, it was amazing meeting artists all across the province. Did you know that we have a whole bunch of artists, Mr. Speaker, that specifically designate and dedicate their time to drawing old buildings in the province, some of the heritage and historical farmhouses and buildings that still stand, especially throughout southern Alberta? It was really, really amazing to see that.

5:10

Interestingly enough, when we talked to them about being recognized as artists, the most important thing that they pointed out to us was being recognized as entrepreneurs. Every single artist is a thumbprint. Having a broad spectrum piece of legislation one way or the other could actually harm their ability to be able to have contracts that supersede what would be set in stone.

In particular, one of the things I wanted to point out – I know we've been having a lot of talks about defending our oil and gas sectors and other sectors in this province. Did you know that the Glenbow Museum has an incredible, incredible, like, chunk of art that is in the basement of the Glenbow Museum? Just early on into our term as government we funded the Glenbow Museum to make sure that as they rebuild the Glenbow, they are be able to bring that artwork out. Did you know who the largest donors are to the Glenbow Museum? Imperial Oil and the Harvie family, both of them coming from oil and gas, millions and millions and millions of dollars and millions of dollars of actual artwork that the Harvie family owned. It's a perfect understanding and conflation, really, of oil and gas – important sectors – and the building of art, the understanding of art, the actual showing and showcasing of art, musicians, and others in the province.

If I remember correctly, in Grande Prairie they have this amazing museum, and it looks like the MOMA. I have had the privilege of going to New York and seeing the MOMA, and it is something else. It's just this spectacular building that's completed dedicated – all of the walls are specifically dedicated, Mr. Speaker – to the art. In Grande Prairie they have this incredible museum that has been funded by the community and the entrepreneurs and the artists themselves. Actually, during COVID they had an entire display on about how that impacted people. A bunch of local artists and artists throughout Alberta had contributed to this wall of art. There was everything from, like, seven-year-olds – I mean, they draw way better than I ever could at the age of 51, so it's not about age; it was just beautiful – and then all the way to people who had been using remnants from their farms and businesses in order to build art because they had never done it before. COVID had given them the time to be able to do that, and they were expressing what they were going through through art.

Those entrepreneurs were able to actually sell their art in that museum and in other museums across the province. The ability for them to be able to do that – showcase, do what they needed to do as entrepreneurs, and be able to stand up proud with the art that they are showcasing – is one of the most spectacular things about this province. I think that sometimes what we forget is that we are a very unique group of people here in this province. We're resilient, strong entrepreneurs, and we like to be able to negotiate our contracts. We like to be able to talk to the people who are maybe looking at our art or potentially being able to sell our art and having the opportunity to have that conversation. We're smart and savvy in this province. We know how to make these contracts work.

If there is an opportunity – the one thing that this piece of legislation does, Mr. Speaker, is that it brings forward the opportunity to talk about those contracts, to acknowledge the fact that these folks deserve to be remunerated appropriately for the work that they are doing. If there's ever been a time when that's been more important, it's right now, as we come back out of COVID, at least to some degree, God willing. We never know these days with COVID where we're going to end up, but I'll tell you this much. The amount of innovation that has happened, because we've been forced into different spaces, and the ability to showcase art has just, I think, blown all of our expectations.

Last year I think I watched 11 different performances online in a four-day period. It was a bit of a binge over the Christmas holidays. I saw everything from an opera performance that was done here in Edmonton on a rooftop, which literally made me cry because it was beautiful – it was outside; we sat in the parking lot, and Edmonton Opera did this unbelievable performance on the rooftop – to the StoryBook Theatre in Calgary doing a COVID version of *Annie*, where they were able to create a cohort and do a performance that was one of the best I'd ever seen. My goodness, it was so well done. You really believed you were there.

If you look at StoryBook Theatre, if you look at individual artists, if you look at everyone, they have figured out in Alberta how this works, and we want to honour that. If there are things and tweaks that need to come along as we go ahead and things evolve, I'm quite certain that our very, very resilient and strong artists in this province will let us know.

But, again, to suggest that we haven't been inclusive of other organizations or cultures in our consultations around what was necessary here would lead me to believe that people would think that those types of art forms are not important to our government, and it would be such a shame to throw that into the mix of a very, very positive piece of legislation when I think everybody in every part of this House has done everything possible to highlight as much as of the culture that we are blessed to participate in in this province. I would hope that that kind of rhetoric and language can be put away and that we understand that it is the work of this House to make sure that we represent all of the people of this province.

Can we do better? Absolutely. There are always opportunities. I think that with the Alberta Foundation for the Arts in particular, right now it is a tremendous goal. And we have the multiculturalism, inclusion, and Indigenous grant, which isn't just about not-for-profits, but it's about culture and building capacity in communities. Let's use these opportunities to build our community and to come together and to unify around that versus divisive rhetoric assuming that there was no consultation amongst the minority organizations in our province that have helped build this beautiful tapestry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? It looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning would like to join in the debate.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise on Bill 75 in third reading, as we're closing out the debate on this bill. Now, I've been hearing a lot of debate going back and forth around artists and the different types of expression of art that happen in the province, and I think we can all mutually agree that we all have a respect for anybody that is in the community. I know, personally, that I'm a horrible musician and couldn't play an instrument probably – well, nobody would want to hear me even try – but I love painting and love drawing. For me, it's the use of my hands and being able to express art through that. I think we all have our different favourite things when it comes to the arts and culture in the province.

What I think we also could probably agree on is that Bill 75 is called the art recognition act because everybody in this Chamber is recognizing that art is important to Alberta, but what I think we disagree on is that this bill actually does something. It does recognize art in the province, and it does recognize that there are artists in the province, but it doesn't speak to what my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs has been hearing, what I have been hearing from my constituents and from people that I know in the arts community in regard to how this bill is actually going to ensure the economic future of the arts community and how we can ensure that there is equitable pay and that people are getting paid in a

timely manner, that they're being honoured for the contributions that are being made within Alberta, and that it's not just a recognition that arts are important but that it's a recognition that artists deserve to be compensated for the gifts that they are giving to Albertans through the work that they do. We don't see that in this piece of legislation.

Now, prior to being elected, I had a business, and I had my own business licence. The reason I did that – and many of us in this Chamber will know why – is because you get to be able to look at your business expenses, and when you are a business, you get to write off some of those expenses against the income that you generate.

5:20

The struggle that many of our artists have in this province is that when they look toward being compensated for their work and they are looking for fair contracts and being recognized for the work that they are doing, there isn't always a necessary requirement for a business licence to be made or to have a business licence, and what my colleague tried to do through an amendment was to make sure that that was an opportunity that was made clearer within this piece of legislation. Again, when we also look at the compensation and contracts, I'm concerned to see that there is a requirement for contract agreements to be made between public bodies and artists, yet there isn't a stipulation here that businesses also enter into those contracts, that there be a requirement for that to happen.

Now, when I hear members of the government talk about, "Well, this is about making sure that we recognize the financial contributions that are being made by artists" and that "this is about ensuring, you know, looking at our economic future and moving forward in building and expanding on the arts community," then it doesn't make sense to me why we wouldn't want to make sure that our legislation, that has the potential to have some of those opportunities for the financial benefits to artists, is aligned with other jurisdictions. I mean, it's been pretty clear. It's been put forward by many members in our caucus that there are pieces of legislation, clearly, in other jurisdictions that do ensure that there is fair compensation, that contracts are honoured, and it doesn't force artists to have to go through a new legal process, through contract law, to be able to be compensated.

It is just that if this legislation was to do what we have been hearing the government say the intention of it is, then it would be within the piece of legislation to say that any artist would be able to enter into a contract, whether it be public or private, as part of this piece of legislation. I appreciate that there's a tool box in this legislation that's going to teach artists about those pieces, but it doesn't give a legislative mechanism for artists to be able to be fairly compensated. All we've heard from the minister in response is: well, they would have to then go through and make a legal application in contract law, and they'd have to do it through that. Well, we also know that this is vicarious work, that the compensation that artists make may not give them the financial ability to be able to enter into a legal challenge around a contract, depending on the size of the contract and what is going on. They may not have the financial ability to be able to do that.

I think it's important that we just recognize, that all members of the House recognize, that the intention of Bill 75 is arts recognition. That is the title. It does say that everybody in this Chamber recognizes the arts. Sure. Let's just all fundamentally agree that that is what the bill does, but that's all it does. It would be, I think, important to hear that the government has recognized that that's what this bill is meant to do. This bill is not meant to do anything else. This bill is not to protect the financial future of our artists. This bill is not to create a structure that supports the arts industry to make

sure that there's fair pay, that they have access to WCB, that EI is in place, that CPP contributions don't have to be paid on both sides, because we know that happens. Artists sometimes have to pay for both the employer and the employee, depending on what kind of contract they've entered into. It does none of that. All it does is say that arts are recognized, that the government thinks arts are important, and that is the summary of the legislation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize what I think I have heard from this Chamber, which is: "We like music. We like art. We like everybody that is contributing, and we appreciate the contributions that the arts community makes to the culture of Alberta." What we fundamentally disagree on is that this bill actually does anything that will support that moving forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it looks like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows would like to add a comment or two. The hon. member has the call.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add some short comments on this Bill 75, the Arts Professions Recognition Act. A lot of members in the House and many of my colleagues have spoken to this bill. We support the idea of this bill as stated in the heading, recognizing the arts, recognizing art. We do want to recognize art, and we all do recognize art, and we recognize the fundamental contributions of art and entertainment in our lives.

I just wanted to share my experience and knowledge, Mr. Speaker. It was surprising and appalling for me to learn that it's not only racialized artists or ethnic communities disproportionately earning less and who basically cannot depend on their career in the entertainment and arts industry, depend on a living from just their profession alone. There are a number of artists, musicians I know that come from other countries. That was my impression. They are still building their livelihoods. There is not enough demand for them. There are artists as well with master's degrees, and I know people with PhDs in music in this city, in my riding that are not able to earn their livelihood based on their education and based on their talent. A number of those people have other jobs to keep their passion and commitment going.

I was surprised to learn that not only racialized communities but artists in general earn almost 50 per cent less than the average Alberta worker normally earns. I look at this and at the contribution of the artistic community and industry to our economy. It's \$1.3 billion annually to the GDP, and approximately 45,000 are employed, with nearly 20,000 permanent, sustained jobs in the industry.

I heard the Premier creating rhetorical speeches today about 2,000 jobs. What is bothering me here is that this government and the UCP caucus failed to understand the importance, seriously, and the contribution of the arts industry. What they could provide, as the bare minimum through this legislation, was certainty to those artists in the industry that if they work, if they perform, they will get paid.

5:30

Simple, simple feedback and amendments were failing to convince the government House members how they are not being able to address the very issues that the artist industry is asking to do, but the opposition's feedback has – I remember the last amendment my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs brought forward was simply to broaden the criteria around who the artists could be in order to negotiate the contract. Not only the government House members but the minister himself and the former minister totally failed to understand the content and spoke at length going out of topic. We feel this is a failed opportunity. The government members

could actually strengthen this bill that would satisfy some of the demands from the artist industry and the opposition feedback, but so far yet we didn't see any seriousness from the government House members. So at this point in time, as I see this bill, it's very hard to support this piece of legislation.

With that, I also conclude my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 75 read a third time]

Government Motions

Oil and Gas Pipeline Opposition

104. Mr. Jason Nixon moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

1. condemn David Suzuki's comments on pipelines as reported by the *National Post*,
2. condemn any comments made calling for the intentional destruction of energy infrastructure, and
3. unequivocally condemn incitements of violent eco terrorism.

[Adjourned debate November 23: Mr. Jeremy Nixon]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has 10 minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Is there anyone else? I believe the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland would like to add a comment or two.

Mr. Getson: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a mixed emotion. I don't know if it's a pleasure to rise and speak to this Motion 104 because the fact that we have to in the first place is a bit disconcerting.

The Minister of Environment and Parks is bringing forward this motion. The motion calls on the Assembly to condemn comments made by David Suzuki calling for the intentional destruction of infrastructure and incitements of violent eco terrorism. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, Dr. David Suzuki has since apologized. His own organization has disavowed anything to do with him in that regard because essentially he was standing shoulder to shoulder with this group called – what are they called again? Oh, yeah, Extinction Rebellion.

I believe the opposition at the time that this was taking place voted 85 per cent not to condemn the remarks made and to stand shoulder to shoulder with a group – and I will, you know, leave it up to the audience at home to understand exactly what we're dealing with. They like to put fairy tales and pixie dust and rainbow flags and, you know, anything else that we want to do to try to gloss over what's taking place with this group particularly and sugar-coat it and call it eco terrorism, but when you've got a group – and let's say that they're not standing against pipelines. When their organizers are quoting: it is now the age of consequence; we need action. The type of action that they're talking about: not only will pipelines be blown up. This is from their national action strategy co-ordinator, and this is a quote: not only will pipelines be blown up, but we can be certain that world leaders will be put on trial for treason or, worse, killed.

Yeah. Let's be clear what that is. That's talking about elected leaders. That's talking about folks that back up the energy sector. That's putting people in harm's way. They're making these types of threats because for some reason they actually think that this is going to be a fight between the survival of the planet and other people that are still supporting energy. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I just

know you're as upset with this as I am, and we're all trying to gloss over it a bit and get by it. But, same quote, they go on to talk about the industries and the governments, that they'll bomb pipelines, they'll kill people, and they'll put the media on trial as well for anybody that supports them. I don't mean, honestly, to point fingers, but I'm very disappointed that the NDP Party supports groups that make those types of threats.

Now, you have to understand that on the pipelines, when we're building these projects, there is a ton of safety that goes involved in that. Every single one of those welds is weld inspected, nondestructive examination. You've got traceability on each one of those lines. You do the care and custody of everything you can on that pipeline to make sure that the environment is taken care of to bring energy to people, to transport goods and services. There are different material types and commodity types within these, and these same eco justice wackadoos are going to go out there and cause disorder.

I'm getting notes from people in the industry that are currently working out there right now, and they're concerned for their well-being. Out in Hope, as an example, one of my constituents was rolling through there and, out on the TMX expansion, runs into one of the hotels – and it's good for the hotels; they're busy, and they're chock full – runs into some security guards that are there on the pipeline. They're heading out on night shift to watch over the pipeline while the hands are coming back in. He asked them if they're very busy, and they said: unfortunately, yes; this has been nonstop. People are out there trying to sabotage, drill holes in the pipe, hitting new pipe. They're out there starting fires. They're ripping up roads. This is nonstop.

The fact that a figure as pronounced as Dr. David Suzuki would even affiliate himself to be standing with these folks, to be speaking to them is validating what they're doing. Now, let's run this through. Let's say that they tap into a high pressure gas line. Well, when that happens, it's a pipe bomb. It's an explosion. They don't have to worry about doing too much. If they dug into one of these things or cracked the valve and lit something, I mean, it's wild. You literally have a crater in the ground. If anybody wants to see this, I mean, consequences? There is a crater there. All there would be is smoke and Birkenstocks sitting on the side of the right-of-way that would be left from the group that did it.

Unfortunately, depending on the commodity type, let's say that – I don't know – ministers, folks in this Assembly, we all have kids, right? These well-meaning eco terrorists that are going to save us all go out there first. They blow themselves apart, and then that product moves downwind. Let's say that it's – I don't know – hydrosulphuric. Maybe there's a little H₂S in that. Now it could gas a bunch of schoolkids. This is the consequence.

Now, we are very fortunate to be in this jurisdiction in Canada. I've had the fortune of working right across this country, down in the States as well. We have so many unprotected areas and regions with our infrastructure because we don't typically have domestic terrorists running around doing this type of work. The last time when I was doing a project that we had concerns of this magnitude was during 9/11 when we were sitting out in the Cold Lake air weapons range for EnCana in a SAGD facility, and everything went into high alert. Down there, Mr. Speaker, when we started hearing about the towers going down, I mean, right now it's still even making the hair stand up on the back of my neck. We had access to the military base down there, and the Member from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul can attest to this. It's pretty wide open, so as it's well-embracing for the town, you can go use the facilities.

When that event took place, that thing absolutely was a military compound. The machine nests came out. You saw air traffic being pulled into the area. That thing was buzzing like you hit a hornet's

nest, literally, because that's where the F/A-18 Hornets are stationed plus all the U.S. air assets. Guess what? They were finding people out on the right-of-way, middle of nowhere. Who were these suspicious people? We lived through that. Travelling into the States and being down there on heights of terrorist threats: we didn't see that in Canada. I did in those projects down south, the people that we had to deal with at those types of events. You might want to put on your eco justice warrior outfit, but this is real. You start making death threats, you start wanting to blow up infrastructure, you want to start blockading critical infrastructure that we have like the trains – that's why we've put in the bill, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, to stop this.

5:40

We managed to get an amendment through because physically out in Acheson, where they had the pipe stored, a bunch of people were trying to go out there and punch holes in a pipe and then put epoxy over it. So once you go put this in place, after all that quality control and testing, you have product weeping all over the place. You put good union hands at risk, non-union people, everything else, for what? My words don't matter as much to that crowd, the how-dare-you crowd. Your words as the opposition do. I can't make the same impact. My crowd understands it and gets it. My crowd are the ones out there building these projects. My crowd are keeping your kids warm at night and safe. Your crowd, the ones you think are your crowd, are the ones that will put all of that in jeopardy and at risk.

It's foolhardy. Please, please, condemn those remarks. There's one thing with the heightened – whatever the reason is you're trying to do. Climate change. We talk about climate change here all the time. We all agree that the climate is changing. Most of the climatologists talk about 10,000-year periods between glaciation periods. That's when we start talking about it, but to put people in harm's way, to more incite, because a lot of these folks want a cause? You're ramping them up, and you've got them scared. There is nothing more dangerous than a scared . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but I might just remind the member that comments like “you” and “your” often end in a lack of decorum, so as opposed to arriving there, perhaps I'll just remind the member to direct his comments through the chair. Hopefully, we'll navigate some sensitive waters together.

Mr. Getson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You're quite right. As you can tell, I'm very passionate about it. It wasn't meant in any way, shape, or form to point out one member in here. It's kind of that side of it, so I appreciate your latitude there and bringing me back.

I guess the point I'm trying to make here, Mr. Speaker, is the comments where you've got groups like this that start threatening lives, livelihoods, and literally people and infrastructure: to the extent of that, they're scared. When you ramp up that fear, fearful things happen. Even though Dr. Suzuki has apologized, I don't know that it fully covers what it does here. I'm really requesting that the opposition members really don't condone that, really understand that their words, through you to them, will have more import than mine. When they're putting kids at risk, when they're putting people at risk, our environment at risk, their words will matter more than mine. It's with that that I'm asking you: please, very strongly consider your words, your actions, your votes because it can have a massive impact on the safety and well-being of a ton of people out there, the kids, our economy, the environment itself. I still can't believe that they voted in favour of that.

The Coastal GasLink project itself, the vast majority of the folks out there along there are participants in this project with well-

meaning intentions for their jobs, for their communities. It actually lifts them up out of despair and poverty. It gives them and makes sure that they have this wherewithal and the financial wherewithal going forward because of these projects going through their communities. It gives us access to global markets. It starts to displace the same thing that a lot of these groups are trying to fight for, which is, you know, dirty oil, dirty this, dirty that. It gives them good, clean energy. It starts to offset a ton of those things. Those are all the benefits. Indigenous people are very supportive of it in that area. Understand that their duly elected chiefs, most of them who are, from my understanding, also ladies as well, are very much onside with this. When you've got all of these people that are very supportive of it, for the love of Pete, I don't understand why you would want to blow that up or threaten people's lives for that.

I strongly encourage the members opposite to go on the record with us on this motion so that we can implore folks to be very careful with that how-dare-you crowd so that they don't cause themselves harm or do harm to our loved ones.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 104 condemns comments made by David Suzuki directly or indirectly calling for the intentional destruction of energy infrastructure. Context is everything. The context here is that David Suzuki made these comments to a journalist during an Extinction Rebellion protest in Victoria on the weekend, on combatting climate change. He said: we're in deep, deep doo-doo; this is what we've come to; the next stage after this there are going to be pipelines blown up if our leaders don't pay attention to what's going on. David Suzuki made these comments amongst some individuals who may in fact blow up pipelines, and he knew it. He knew it.

I want to talk about the Extinction Rebellion. On October 7 the Extinction Rebellion occupied the Walterdale Bridge. Mr. Speaker, this was an Extinction Rebellion occupation. They were occupiers. They would not leave. Unlike the NDP, there was no election to kick them out.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: I just want to provide some caution. I would be reluctant to try to guess where the member was going with his remarks, but I do know that my colleagues who occupy this chair have provided some caution to this member about language around occupation, the NDP occupation, occupation of the NDP, all these sort of too cute by half ways of saying things that are unparliamentary. I encourage him in the remainder of his remarks with respect to Government Motion 104 that he heed the advice of my colleagues who also occupy the chair.

Debate Continued

Mr. Stephan: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I was speaking specifically just to the occupation by the Extinction Rebellion. They would not leave the bridge. Hundreds of motorists were trapped, including myself. I walked to the bridge, and I saw what happened. I saw lawbreakers who were indifferent to many repeated pleas to just let them pass.

Mr. Speaker, where were the police? The public was asking: where are they? They took an hour to come. An hour to come. But instead of removing the occupiers, they formed a protective line for them, ignoring the pleas to just enforce the law. The public faith in

the rule of law was weakened by the police's failure to do their job. This occupation occurred on a Monday morning, when Albertans were just trying to get to work. Those trapped in the blockade could have included Albertans with medical emergencies. The Extinction Rebellion did not care. They just let them pass. When laws are not enforced, lawbreakers are emboldened.

Mr. Speaker, let's be honest. Members of Extinction Rebellion are not Conservative voters. They're not. They're NDP voters, and for political gain the NDP is failing to stand up to Extinction Rebellion.

5:50

It is not right that Extinction Rebellion considers themselves to be a law unto themselves and forces extreme views on the public by seeking to punish and wreck the normal day-to-day lives of working Albertans and families. Mr. Speaker, if you will recall, just prior to COVID there was a lawless blockade of rail lines, and Canada's first NDP Prime Minister did nothing to prevent that. He did nothing. He sat in a thoughtless stupor.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we did not. Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, seeks to protect essential infrastructure, including pipelines, from damage or interference caused by blockades or occupations, which can cause significant social, safety, and economic consequences. The act will hold lawbreaking Extinction Rebellion more accountable.

Mr. Speaker, after witnessing the indifference to the suffering and pleas of the public by the lawbreakers, over time it's become evident that Bill 1 may not go far enough. Unfortunately, we cannot necessarily depend on the police to enforce the law or impose financial penalties on selfish occupiers indifferent to the long suffering of Alberta businesses and families seeking to live their day-to-day lives. Bill 1 may need to be amended to provide self-help remedies to long-suffering Albertans who suffer loss at the hands of lawbreakers and provide them an expedited process to recover their losses suffered at the hands of lawbreakers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposed Bill 1. By doing so, like David Suzuki, they are encouraging, aiding, and abetting illegal occupying such as setting up an illegal occupation of the Walterdale Bridge. Do law-abiding Edmontonians agree with them? No. I can tell you that the Edmontonians suffering under the Extinction Rebellion of the Walterdale Bridge did not agree with them. [interjection] I'll take an intervention.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Member. Obviously, you're very passionate about blocking of infrastructure and causing damage. The blockade that you're talking about took place actually out in Acheson, which is in my constituency. It was very reassuring at that point in time. If we can frame it across the country, there wasn't a lot of police intervention, and they were allowing that, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member, but the police services in that area did allow a counterprotest, is what they called it. There were a lot of

folks that got together, grabbed some one-tonne trucks, grabbed those blockades, and took it down, and what you saw with that: because of that civil action of folks doing it lawfully and law abiding under the supervision of the police services, it literally stopped the blockades across the rest of the country. That was the catalyst that took place.

In the member's opinion, with any amendments what would you include in that to help facilitate or to help empower folks or the police themselves to understand that these illegal blockades, in potentially causing threats and damage to the infrastructure – they can resolve it and take place.

Mr. Stephan: Well, I really appreciate that question. At the Walterdale Bridge blockade they used a couple of wooden canoes, and they basically formed a line, a human line across the bridge. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Edmontonians were extremely frustrated because this was a huge snarl. Of course, when you blockade a bridge crossing the river – there aren't many bridges crossing the river – it becomes a really frustrating bottleneck. The trouble is that citizens, normal Albertans do not want to break the law, and they're uncertain on their position. They did want to physically just move the canoes from blocking it. The illegal occupiers, the blockaders, said: don't touch that; that's personal property. Frankly, you know, Edmontonians, individuals and families, don't want to deal with that uncertainty; they just want to be left alone. They don't want to have to do that.

In answer to that question, you know, when we experience economic loss, instead of relying on the police to enforce the law, under tort, in terms of the economic losses suffered by individuals, families, and businesses who suffer losses under the blockade, it would be very good to give them self-help remedies so that they themselves, without relying on the police action, can bring a civil action, frankly, against those lawbreakers who blockade public spaces.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I'm running out of time. Why? Why do the members opposite scurry away? Why do they sit upon their thrones in a thoughtless stupor? Where are they? Where are they? Are they frightened and confused? Are they going to hide in dark corners? They need to call out Extinction Rebellion. I call on them to join us, to join the winning team, to join long-suffering Albertans and reject Extinction Rebellion and support this motion.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The chief government whip.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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